

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &  
Professional Papers

Graduate School

---

1979

### Montana Staats-Zeitung 1914-1917: A German newspaper in America during World War I

Marian Holter Brod  
*The University of Montana*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

#### Recommended Citation

Brod, Marian Holter, "Montana Staats-Zeitung 1914-1917: A German newspaper in America during World War I" (1979). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 5048.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/5048>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1976

THIS IS AN UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT IN WHICH COPYRIGHT SUBSISTS. ANY FURTHER REPRINTING OF ITS CONTENTS MUST BE APPROVED BY THE AUTHOR.

MANSFIELD LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA  
DATE: 1979

THE MONTANA STAATS-ZEITUNG 1914-1917:  
A GERMAN NEWSPAPER IN AMERICA DURING WORLD WAR I

By

Marian Holter Brod

B.A., University of Montana, 1969

Presented in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1979

Approved by:

*K. Ross Toole*

*Horst Marka*

Chairman, Board of Examiners

*R. Manning*

Dean, Graduate School

*Aug. 2, 1979*

Date

UMI Number: EP40512

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP40512

Published by ProQuest LLC (2014). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

9-12-79

## ABSTRACT

Brod, Marian Holter, M.A., July 1979

German

The Montana Staats-Zeitung 1914-1917: A German Newspaper in America during World War I (112 pp.)

Directors: Horst Jarka and K. Ross Toole



This thesis examines the German-American immigrants in Montana as they represent themselves in their own newspaper, the Montana Staats-Zeitung, before and during World War I.

Primary research sources were articles and editorials printed in the German press during the war years, 1914 to 1917, and records of the Montana Council of Defense. Most articles used were printed originally in German. They were translated into English and organized thematically by chapters.

The Germans in Montana, as well as in other states, were a distinct and separate entity of American society, who sought to preserve their cultural uniqueness by supporting German businesses and promoting German unity. Their interests and activities were manifested in the pages of their newspaper.

The thesis documents that the German newspaper, which served as a voice for this ethnic group, came under such tremendous pressure during World War I, that it was forced to close down. Continuing to publish a newspaper in the German language while the United States was at war with Germany proved to be an impossible task for its editor, Dr. Karl Weiss.

The thesis concludes that anti-German sentiment grew rapidly in this country during wartime, and these "foreigners", the vast majority of whom were loyal citizens, were subjected to all kinds of persecution, simply because of their ethnic origin. Public consciousness at this time in history was characterized by "Americanism", and patriotism swept the country at a feverish pitch, never again to be felt with such intensity.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ILLUSTRATION.....	iii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
I    PUBLISHING HISTORY OF THE NEWSPAPER.....	8
II   PRESERVING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE.....	19
III  GERMAN POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND WORLD WAR I..	33
IV   PATRIOTISM OR TREASON?.....	47
V    PERSECUTION.....	66
VI   WAR WITH THE <u>HELENA INDEPENDENT</u> .....	81
VII  A LOSING BATTLE.....	92
CONCLUSION.....	103
APPENDIX.....	108
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	110



## INTRODUCTION

The Montana Staats-Zeitung is the main source for this study. This newspaper was printed in the German language and published in Helena, Montana, from 1886 until 1917. The purpose of the thesis is to show how Americans of German extraction were treated during World War I in this country, including the problems they had to face when their national origin proved to be a stigma. The thesis also examines the adversities which eventually forced this German newspaper to close down.

I have concentrated mainly on the selection and translation of German articles in the Montana Staats-Zeitung between 1914 and 1917. The newspaper is not readily available for reference by the general public. In the translations I have attempted as much as possible to retain the flavor and feeling connoted by the German version. The journalistic style used was sometimes bombastic, sometimes sensational. This emotional style caused by the war tensions was by no means limited to the German papers, for English-language newspapers indulged<sup>in it</sup> to an equal if not greater degree. Some of the articles are lengthy, but must be retained in their entirety to preserve the mood. Footnotes referring to articles originally in German in the Montana Staats-Zeitung are followed by a (G). Footnotes referring



to those articles printed in English are followed by an (E). My translations from the German were checked for accuracy by Professor Horst Jarka of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Montana.

The organization of the thesis is basically thematic, since the content of many of the articles seemed to fall into few specific categories. The war limited the subject matter.

Several terms need explanation since they are used frequently in the thesis. The immigrants under consideration here are referred to as German-Americans. The question arises as to whether this label was based on the language spoken by these people or on their country of origin. Most Germans who came to this country prior to the 1880's came from Germany proper. In 1910 immigrants were asked upon arrival in America what their mother tongue was, in addition to their country of origin. Many who were non-natives of Germany claimed German as their mother tongue. People who spoke German came from Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, Russia and other Slavic countries. The cultural differences among these groups disappeared in their new homeland and they were all labeled German-Americans because of their common language. The fact that those from Germany proper tended to be leaders within ethnic groups in America perpetuated the myth that they were all the same. During the war native-born Americans referred derogatorily to them as "hyphenates". President Wilson said they were German-Americans because only

part of them had come over; which part was not made clear.

Another term requiring explanation is the Montana State Council of Defense. In 1916 President Wilson organized the Council of National Defense to stimulate economic productivity for the war effort. The individual states followed suit and in 1917 Governor Sam Stewart formed the Montana Council of Defense for the same purpose. He appointed seven members among the local businessmen to serve in this organization. The initial goals were to urge farmers to increase crop production, to promote the sale of liberty bonds and to organize programs supporting the war effort. Councils were also formed at the county level. Through a special legislative session the Council became a legal authority with more power and financial backing. The records of this organization, on file at the Montana Historical Society in Helena, Montana, are massive. They were used as a secondary source for this thesis.

The Montana Staats-Zeitung was selected for this study because it was the longest-running, most complete German newspaper in Montana. It was of prime interest because it managed to survive through most of the war years. Several other minor German publications existed, such as the Butte City Freie Presse, the Familienblatt (1892-1895) and the Montana Herold (1892-1902) in Great Falls, but they were short-lived. Almost all issues of the Montana Staats-Zeitung are still stored in the Archives at the Historical Society in Helena. Many German-Americans in Montana sub-

scribed to the newspaper, or were at least familiar with it because it was the only local German paper which offered them news reports not considered pro-British. Circulation figures available were as follows: 1890 - 2100 subscribers; 1900 - 750; 1905 - 2200; 1910 - 1800; 1915 - 1400. In 1914 there were 537 German-language newspapers in the United States. In 1920 there were only 278. The dramatic drop in numbers is evidence that many of the newspapers met the same fate as the Montana Staats-Zeitung.

The dates of a few specific events were decisive as turning points for the German-Americans in this country, such as the beginning of the war in Europe in August, 1914, and the declaration of war by the United States in April, 1917. The Council of Defense decision to ban the use of the German language in April, 1918, also had a profound and irreversible effect on this ethnic group.

In 1915 25 per cent of all American high school students studied the German language. Up until 1917 it was considered the language of education and learning. The teaching of German in high schools in the United States was all but eliminated during World War I. Following the national trend the teaching of German in Montana was forbidden by the Council of Defense in 1918.

My topic borders on several broad areas of historical study, such as the history of immigration and ethnic minorities, development of Foreign Language newspapers in the United States, investigation of popular reaction to the

outbreak and conduct of World War I, and more specifically the examination of the archives of the Montana Council of Defense. Sources listed in the bibliography provide additional reading on these subjects. The amount of literature on the history of World War I as well as on ethnic minorities is voluminous. But no detailed study has been made presenting the German point of view<sup>in America</sup>. In this respect the present thesis offers original material which may be of value to further studies.

In 1913 the Montana Staats-Zeitung reports:

Commissioner F. M. Kennedy received a request from an emigration office in Berlin for information about working and agricultural conditions in Montana. It is indicated in the letter that many Germans intend, possibly in the course of the summer, to immigrate to Montana.<sup>1</sup>

Many Germans did come to Montana around the turn of the century and later. And they intended to preserve their cultural and religious heritage which had been a source of comfort and security to them in the old country.

The German-Americans had one common bond--the German language. Many immigrants, especially the older ones, could not speak English; in fact, for some time there was really no need to use English. They could easily conduct their business and social affairs in their own language. The newspaper helped them to stay informed about their fellow immigrants and about what concerned them as a unit.

The Montana Staats-Zeitung was the only major Ger-

man publication in the states of Montana and Idaho. It was printed entirely in the German language until World War I, when some articles started coming out in English. As the German press became a sounding board for this ethnic group, it provides insight into the lives, interests, culture and fears of the German-American community.

The subject matter dealt with in the articles of this newspaper was fairly mundane--not reaching much beyond family news and community affairs--that is, until World War I. The German-Americans had little or no interest in politics per se before the war. Then they regretted not having become involved sooner. Now that the Fatherland, Germany, was at war, they felt a dire need to voice their opinions about the issues, to fight for their rights in their adopted homeland, to fight for their very existence. The more the German-Americans voiced these opinions as American citizens, the worse their troubles became.

Where did their loyalties really lie? Did they support the land of their birth, now at war, or the United States, their new home, which seemed to favor the allies? Naturally the Germans wanted to support friends and relatives who lived in their fatherland and fought in its armies. This was very disturbing to the native-born Americans. When the United States entered the war on the other side, the Germans here had to make a choice.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, April 4, 1913, p.12. (G)

## CHAPTER I

### PUBLISHING HISTORY OF THE NEWSPAPER

The German newspaper which was the main source of this thesis was called the Montana Staats-Zeitung. It began publication in August of 1886 under the title of the Montana Freie Presse, but the name was changed on April 2, 1889, to the Montana Staats-Zeitung. The last issue came out on September 27, 1917. The first publisher was Philipp Schmitz who had previously published the Butte Freie Presse. The Montana Staats-Zeitung was a weekly paper, published every Friday by the Montana Staats-Zeitung Publishing Company in Helena, Montana, and it usually ran twelve pages in length. It had representatives in Berlin, Vienna, Zurich, New York and Chicago. The head office was at 123 North Jackson Street in Helena. The price was 25¢ a copy or \$2.00 per yearly subscription. The Montana Staats-Zeitung was the only major German newspaper in Montana and Idaho at the time. Its readers were German-Americans, Germans, Austrians and the Swiss in these two states, and to some degree throughout the United States.

In the following I shall give a brief account of its publication history: The founder Philipp Schmitz, after starting the paper under the name Montana Freie Presse, sold

it in 1888 to Mr. Lambert Naegele, then the publisher of the Freie Presse in Minneapolis. Mr. Naegele changed the name to Montana Staats-Zeitung and raised it to more respectable standards that would enable it to survive competition from other German newspapers. In 1895 he moved to Seattle and turned the paper over to his son, Fritz Naegele, who was the president of the Naegele Printing Company in Helena. In 1908 he sold the paper to a group of Germans who had founded the Montana Staats-Zeitung Publishing Company, and the editorship was entrusted to Mr. Bernhardt Baurschmidt. The newspaper had had numerous editors since its founding. It was edited by Fred Schülten until 1889, G. Grueb from 1890 to 1891, Carl Rasch from 1892 to 1897, J. C. Martin in 1905, Theodore Brockman in 1906, J. Attenberger in 1907 and by Bernhardt Baurschmidt from 1908 to 1916.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Baurschmidt made the newspaper a very influential voice of the German-Americans, until June of 1916 when he sold the controlling interest to Dr. Karl Weiss. Weiss remained editor until the paper closed down in September of 1917, and during this time he added Montana German Press to the title. Stockholders who held more than one per cent of the shares in the Montana Staats-Zeitung Publishing Company were: Karl Weiss, John Commers, John Adami, Carl Rasch, Charles Gaier and C. Felter. "Mr. William Elzner contributed to the technical preparation of each issue as the typesetter. John Commers was the manager of the Naegele Printing Company, and Lambert Naegele Jr., the printer, saw to it



that once a page was set, it actually got printed."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately very little could be found about the editors themselves, except for brief mention in the newspaper. For a short time Mr. Baurschmidt edited the paper jointly with a Mr. Waldemar Stein, whose obituary was published in a December 1916 issue:

The one time joint-owner of the Montana Staats-Zeitung and publisher of the Montana Herald in Great Falls, Waldemar Stein, died last Monday in Butte at the age of sixty. [. . .] He later came to Helena where he ran the Montana Staats-Zeitung with Bernhard Baurschmidt, but soon sold his interest to Baurschmidt. [. . .] He was also an active member of the Order of the Sons of Hermann here [in Helena], whose secretary he was until his death.<sup>3</sup>

When Baurschmidt left the paper, he became the president of the "Helena Unabhängiger Bürger-Verein", a local branch of the German-American National Alliance, which will be dealt with in greater detail later. Mr. Baurschmidt and his wife moved to Portland, Oregon, in 1923.

The only obtainable information about Dr. Karl Weiss appeared in an article when he took over the newspaper.

A good reputation precedes the new manager of the Montana Staats-Zeitung. He is known as one of the first German-American journalists whose abilities and services have many times been appreciated. The emperor of Austria, the king of Serbia and the Pope have honored him with decorations; the German emperor and the Crown Prince have expressed their very highest appreciation to him, and on account of his tact and being a good American citizen, he has acquired the favor of the American authorities.

Dr. Weiss, who is also proprietor of a Seattle weekly paper, will, through his connections with the Overseas News Agency and with the foremost German men of letters, be able to make the reading matter more interesting as [sic] before. And he will offer the Germans of Montana a paper as they

deserve it on account of their number and position.<sup>4</sup>

Upon accepting his new position, Dr. Weiss replied:

The Montana Staats-Zeitung has changed its publisher and I am going to be its editor. It will not change its attitude in matters relating to the special interests of the German-American population of Montana. It would be impossible to improve on the faithful service which Mr. Bernhardt Baurschmidt has heretofore rendered in this respect. . . . I am however going to change the form and the contents of the paper, so as to use for its benefit my wide experience, especially during the last five years, when I published the Vancouver German Press and thereafter the Seattle German Press. . . . It will be one of my principle objects to win for the paper the interest of readers who are unable to understand the German language; for it has become most necessary in the interest of the harmony and the unity of our beloved country America that the elements of this nation, which are not of German origin, begin to learn something of the particular ideas and desires of their German-American fellow citizens.<sup>5</sup>

Three months after Dr. Weiss became the editor and manager, the Montana Staats-Zeitung Publishing Company held a stockholders meeting, at which the members decided to call the paper the Montana German Press and Montana Staats-Zeitung. The reasons given for this were that Americans could not pronounce or even remember the German title. "The share capital of the firm was also raised in order to make the paper better and more influential, by selling shares at \$10.00 a piece."<sup>6</sup>

In January of 1915 an announcement was made that in the future, the paper would print some articles and editorials in English.

In order to give our friends who can't read German, the opportunity to find out how the American citizens of German origin accept the

hateful attacks of the American press, we have decided to follow the example of larger German newspapers in the United States by printing several articles in each issue in the English language.<sup>7</sup>

The newspaper welcomed advertisements. It had strong support, not only from Helena businesses, but also from many throughout the state. Here are just a few patrons: Schierts und Ries Händler in Heu, Getreide, Mehl [merchants in hay, grain and flour]; Hermann und Company Möbel [Furniture]; Fred Sass Tabak [Tobacco]; Sanitary Meat Company; Jacquemin Jewelry Company; Jonas Brothers Taxidermists; National Bank of Montana; Montana Brewing Company; Great Falls Meat Company; O'Conner Unternehmer [Entrepreneur]; Fisher Drug Company; Kooi Coal Helena Fuel Company; A. M. Holter Hardware Company; Montana Power Company; Helena Stamp Works; Billings Rex Bar and the New York Dry Goods Store. A great many advertisements were for Montana breweries. One amusing advertisement was for the Billings Brewing Company: "Old Fashion Bier - Das Bier, auf welches Milwaukee eifersüchtig ist." [The beer which makes Milwaukee jealous].

Some advertisements were directed specifically to the German-Americans who might need special services from their fellow Germans. For example, this one was written in German by Joseph P. Vilck, a German lawyer, and translates as:

I represent clients in all civil and criminal lawsuits and secure damages in accidents. I am proficient in German and all Slavic languages. I have had much experience in European legal matters, such as matters of probate, power of attorney,

wills, receipts and contracts. I will obtain consular documents and settle affairs with military authorities in Germany and Austria.<sup>9</sup>

Occasionally a cartoon appeared in the newspaper. One cartoon, for example, in a 1914 edition revealed a British commander addressing his troops. The caption read: "Jungens seid nicht besorgt! Es macht nichts aus wie sehr uns auch die Deutschen verhauen. Solange wir nur die Telegraphen-Amter kontrollieren, sind wir doch die Sieger."<sup>10</sup> To paraphrase in English: The English need not worry about the Germans beating them up, for as long as the English control the telegraph offices, they will be the victors. The Great Falls Tribune refused to print this cartoon.

The success of the newspaper grew steadily, and at one point the editor even contemplated making it into a daily paper. Shortly before its end the paper celebrated its thirtieth anniversary with a special jubilee edition, which could be seen as its climax. The editor voiced his happiness at its success, at the same time perhaps seeing the writing on the wall concerning the future of the publication. An article in a 1916 issue stated:

Nobody can deny that the newspaper has improved significantly under the new management, but it can and must become still better. From June to July business increased 400 per cent which goes to show what can be done with a newspaper if it is run by expert management. But to make the paper something really big and great, all thinking Germans must help or we cannot reach our goal. You gentlemen must buy Montana Staatszeitung shares.[. . .] And our fellow Americans shall know that it is the mouthpiece of the Germans living here.<sup>11</sup>

Times were difficult for newspapers, especially German ones. The drive to maintain the Montana Staats-Zeitung was strong and its editor cried out for support. In April of 1917 he wrote:

Germans of Montana! In a few days you will receive the thirty year anniversary issue of the Montana German Press. We celebrate this anniversary at a sad time for us German-Americans, but also sad times have come for the newspapers and especially for the German weeklies. Paper and printing costs have reached a height that endangers the existence of this paper in the very near future, and we must beseech you to ensure the continuation of the German paper. [. . .]

The contents of the first page of the anniversary edition will inform you that we have ensured a place for you in Montana, which no one until now was capable of. Now it is up to you to support the paper by buying shares.<sup>12</sup>

At this point the existence of the paper was threatened from many sides. People were not paying for their subscriptions on time:

To our subscribers: Upon looking through our books we find that a large number of our subscribers are behind with their payments. We would like to remind these gentlemen that it is impossible for a company to put out a good newspaper when the readers stay behind in their payments. Don't forget that we must pay our staff promptly every week. How can we do this, if the money doesn't come in on time? It depends on you, honorable subscribers, whether or not you'll get a good newspaper, so please pay!<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Weiss wrote this as soon as the paper came into his hands. It seems he had planned to be more firm with his readers, and that perhaps Mr. Baurschmidt had been too lax in his requests for payment. Dr. Weiss sounded politely desperate in his attempt to get the paper on its feet again.

In January, 1917, a poem was published as another means of expressing the national feeling the newspaper represented to the German-Americans. In the poem the newspaper is a guiding light, fighting for and bringing the truth into the homes of these German-Americans. It was printed in a newsletter of the "Order of the Sons of Hermann", a powerful and influential, fraternal organization among Germans in Montana at the time (see infra, p.20 and n. 1, p.31).

Die deutsche Presse, sie kämpft und ficht  
 Für unsere erhabene Lehre.  
 Sie trägt in die Häuser der Wahrheit Licht  
 Und sammelt der Denkenden Heere;  
 Sie streitet und wirbt ohne Unterlaß  
 Und tröstet der Gegner fanatischen Haß.  
 Drum kämpfe auch du, mein deutsches Volk  
 Für deine Presse, die freie,  
 Die stets für dich und dein heiliges Recht  
 Gestritten in der vordersten Reihe.<sup>14</sup>

The article went on to stress that production of a newspaper was getting more expensive, including the cost of paper, metal and printer's ink.

In August of 1917, Dr. Weiss made one more plea to his readers to save the paper. He stated that in the future the paper would be shortened to eight pages, cutting out the Sunday supplement and many advertisements, due to higher prices and wages. He would attempt to print only the most important events and emphasize the loyal sentiment of German-American citizens. He warned that the loss of the paper as a stronghold of the German-American community would be used by its enemies to thwart the Germans socially and economically. Punctual payment on the part of the subscribers was

the last chance to keep the paper going.

From this point on, certain issues and parts of the newspaper appeared late or not at all because, as the management stated, the train just could not deliver the goods fast enough. Finally on September 27, 1917, this announcement appeared in the paper:

As a result of Dr. Weiss' absence, the president and manager of the Montana Staats-Zeitung Publishing Company, who has been in Chicago for five months and has given us no definite assurance that he will return, and further due to the present unsatisfactory situation of temporary management, we are now forced to announce that with this issue, the publication and printing of the Montana Staats-Zeitung must be discontinued. The business regulation and management concerning the fate of the Staats-Zeitung lies completely in the hands of the stockholders and the owner of the newspaper.

--Naegele Printing Company<sup>15</sup>

With this statement, the newspaper came to its rather abrupt and regrettable end--never again to be published. Not only had political pressures brought about its demise, but also the editor had to contend with rising costs and wages, a paper shortage, censorship of material printed in the German language, and delay in receiving payment from subscribers. The editor himself was not even present, but rather in Chicago for the last five months of the paper's existence, clearly a very critical time. His reason for leaving the state was never mentioned, and it was also doubtful that he ever returned to Helena. Last but not least, businesses in Montana had gradually withdrawn their advertisements from the newspaper, lessening its support and funds. This took place when the United States entered the war, and anti-

German sentiment and suspicion began to rise in the state.



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Karl J.R. Arndt and May E. Olson, German-American Newspapers and Periodicals 1732-1955 (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer Publishers, 1961), p.281.

<sup>2</sup>Special Edition, Montana Staats-Zeitung, April, 1917, p.18. (G)

<sup>3</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, December 28, 1916, p.1. (G)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., June 16, 1916, p.1. (E)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., June 23, 1916, p.1. (E)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., September 29, 1916, p.6. (G)

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., January 1, 1915, p.6. (G)

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., November 20, 1914, p.6. (G)

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.7. (G)

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., November 6, 1914, p.1. (G)

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., August 11, 1916, p.6. (G)

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1917, p.6. (G)

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., June 23, 1916, p.8. (G)

<sup>14</sup>Hermanns-Söhne (Sons of Hermann), January 1917, p.3. Montana Historical Society Library, Archives, Montana Council of Defense papers, Box 4. Translation is found in the Appendix.

<sup>15</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, September 27, 1917, p.1. (G)

## CHAPTER II

### PRESERVING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Not only in Montana, but throughout the United States, the Germans felt a strong kinship with their fellow Germans. This feeling of unity in their adopted homeland was kept alive through many channels and agencies which were publicized in the Staats-Zeitung. In Montana as well as in other states, there existed innumerable "Vereine", that is, clubs, organizations and orders whose members were German or of German origin. These clubs met often and came together to support various causes. Some of these clubs were: the "Helena Gesangverein Germania", the "Butte Liederkrantz", the "Männerchor Teutonia" in Anaconda, the "Deutsche Kriegerverein" in Helena and Butte, the "Helena Bürgerverein", the Helena Independent Citizens' League, also known as the "Deutsch-Amerikanischer Staatsverband", and the "Montana Sängerbund". Members of these ranged anywhere from war veterans to singers. They came together to raise money for the war and the Red Cross. Helena had a German bowling team, German theater performances and its own German businesses. New clubs seemed to be forming all the time. The Lutheran and Catholic churches also strengthened this sense of solidarity which was pervasive in the German community.

One of the most powerful and influential orders at

that time was the "Hermanns-Söhne", a fraternal German organization in the state, with the interest of perpetuating German ideals, music and literature--the concept of "Kultur". It was named for Hermann, who was referred to as "that great deliverer of our forefathers from the domination of the Romans."<sup>1</sup> Every respectable German-American citizen was a member of this order. It put out a newsletter to keep the members informed about what was going on in other lodges in the state.

Between 1914 and 1917 many of the new clubs founded were branches of the German-American National Alliance<sup>2</sup> and meetings convened for patriotic or political reasons.

Butte: Nearly 200 German-Americans met last Tuesday in a patriotic atmosphere in the German Hall and founded the Butte league of the German-American National Alliance. The main speech was given by Pastor Dr. Witenberg and in the English language. His speech was full of inspiration for the German cause.

Great Falls: A local league of the German-American National Alliance was founded here last week with 150 inspired citizens of German origin.<sup>3</sup>

[. . .] The German community in Anaconda was strongly represented through the gymnastics and singing clubs in the "Hermanns-Söhne" lodge [. . .] The fact that the local German community has again awakened, shows the support for the above mentioned undertaking, which took place on October twenty-third.<sup>4</sup>

The Helena branch league already has a membership of nearly 400 and the goal set by president Baurschmidt is 1000 members for Helena and the surrounding area.<sup>5</sup>

Germans in cities throughout Montana also attempted to consolidate small clubs into one large one, partly to

show their strength in numbers, as is evident in this article:

In Butte on Tuesday evening the German-American Citizens' League was founded. Representatives from the Veterans' Association, the singing club, the Sons of Hermann and the German church community gathered together, after uniting beforehand in their respective groups, to join the new city league in totality. These four unions form the base of the city league which can then be expanded. In this way, a membership of about 1000 can soon be reached in Butte. City leagues exist now in Helena, Great Falls, Missoula, Livingston and Butte. The goal: to unite the different city leagues into one German-American state league in connection with the National Alliance.<sup>6</sup>

It was felt that "the German community in America had awakened out of its Sleeping Beauty slumber, now conscious of one common goal towards which to strive."<sup>7</sup>

Another popular affair with the Germans was the national festival which enabled them to meet German-Americans from other states. In 1915 the newspaper published an elaborate advertisement for the Omaha choral festival:

The five large festival concerts will offer the public unforgettable artistic treats. The German community throughout the West is cordially invited to this mass gathering. Off to the "Omaha Sangerfest"! [. . .] The magnificent festival, the twenty-sixth national festival of the choral society [Sangerbund] of the Northwest, will take place in Omaha, the queen of the West, and it is divided into five marvelous concerts. [. . .] In the following we give the very promising festival programs which, in the history of German choral groups in America, may never be surpassed both in magnitude and the quality of the artistic treats to be expected. Never before were so many world famous artists engaged for a choral festival. [. . .] Let us, through mass attendance show that we too, in this country, hold fast to German customs, manners and culture.<sup>8</sup>

Another means by which the Germans demonstrated their unity was through patronizing all German companies

and businesses. Here is an example which appeared as an advertisement in the Staats-Zeitung:

The German Farmland Company in Chicago, whose address can be found in the advertising section, has decided, upon our recommendation, to extend its activity into Montana. The action of this firm was truly a real blessing for the farmers in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota and Dakota [sic], since it is the central place for all farm workers seeking jobs. We can heartily recommend this firm, which demands no payment on the part of the employer. Farmers, who need help, turn to this German Farm Company in Chicago which sends, without cost, responsible farmhands.<sup>9</sup>

While the war was still in its early stages, the Germans here worked hard to save and send money to help those in the "old country". For example, the following was written about a concert in Butte, given as a benefit for the German and Austro-Hungarian Red Cross:

But greater than the financial gain is the value of united co-operation. The Germans have united here with all Austrian and Hungarian nations [nationalities within the Austro-Hungarian Empire] for a great cause, just as they fight united on the other side of the ocean, and only this unity can be thanked for the splendid outcome of the concert.<sup>10</sup>

It is not clear for exactly what cause the Germans in this country were united--whether it was to pledge political support for the German government, or to raise money as humanitarian aid for the German people. Their failure to make this distinction added to the suspicions that native American patriots had concerning German-American loyalty.

Social, cultural and political divisions can usually be distinguished within any society, but whatever interests the German-Americans might have pursued in these

areas were washed out by the hysteria of the war. This vagueness was partly due to the naive attitude of the immigrants at this time, not only of German-Americans, but other nationalities as well. What really lay behind their push for "united co-operation" was the preservation of <sup>their</sup> cultural heritage in this country. Native-born Americans however, saw this "blockade mentality", often attributed to the Germans, only in political terms.

Another way to raise money was by selling rings to help the cause in Europe:

Helena: Pride and joy were felt by the members of the aid-society committee, as it was in the position last Friday to send away \$1,000--\$500 to both the German and Austro-Hungarian Consulates. As long as the war lasts, money must be collected for the wartime refugees and those who can afford it should always contribute--weekly, monthly, whenever possible. Now, for example, the "Kriegsnot" [literally: distress in wartime] rings are here; everyone should make the effort to obtain a ring--the symbol of loyalty to your German Fatherland.<sup>11</sup>

The most obvious way to preserve German culture in the United States was, of course, ~~through~~ the use and perpetuation of the German language. Although the people were pressured and later forced into learning and using English, they fought as long as possible to maintain German in all phases of life.

Mrs. John Carstensen recently returned from a six-week visit with her parents in Schleswig, Iowa. Mrs. Carstensen reported that in Schleswig, Low German is spoken just as well and as much as in Schleswig in the old homeland. The people of Schleswig-Holstein will make sure that Low German doesn't die out in America, or better still, that it will soon become the language of the country.<sup>12</sup>

It was, of course, preposterous to think that Low German--the dialect spoken in Northern Germany--was ever to become the "language of the country." Much less preposterous was the assumption that the German language as such would be elevated to that position. At that time, there were many immigrants and new settlers in America and because parts of the country were very isolated, some communities rarely or never heard English spoken, especially religious communities such as the Hutterites and the Amish. If German had become the national language, High German, of course, rather than any one dialect would have been used. High German, the established literary and official language of Germany, is taught in American high schools, used by the national media in Germany, and is understood by all Germans, even by those who normally speak a dialect such as Low German.

But the Germans in general were not naive in this matter. They also realized that the English language must be dealt with and if they wanted to be heard, they would have to communicate with their fellow Americans on common ground--by using English. It was to be expected that some of the die-hard Germans would take offense at the English printed in the Montana Staats-Zeitung.

[. . .] Times have changed during the last two years and we ordinary people, who cannot stand up against the spirit of the times, must get accustomed to the changes. Had we recognized this gradually advancing change years ago, and accommodated ourselves to it, the German community in the United States would be better off today. But we decided not to have anything to do with those who didn't speak German; we wanted to build a state within a state. The obvious result is that our influence, our importance today, is exactly nil. The language of the land is English. If we want to make known our goals, endeavors and our identity to the

non-Germans in this growing nation, to integrate our good qualities into the formation of the national character, then it can only happen through the English language. [. . .] What we must do is make those citizens who don't read German, aware of our way of thinking. Otherwise what will they know about us?<sup>13</sup>

That the language is a tie, which holds together more strongly than geographic and political boundaries, can be concluded from the gratifying fact [erfreuliche Thatsache] that the German-Russians, who have settled in large numbers in Nebraska and the Dakotas, are almost completely on the German side in their sympathies.<sup>14</sup>

Because the Germans thought of themselves as a unit, they stood against anything which threatened this sense of solidarity, or anyone who questioned their good reputation as a contributing and law-abiding entity in society. For example, there appeared a warning in the newspaper, in 1914, about a thirty year old man who claimed to be Swiss. He was staying in Butte, pretending to be engaged by the German newspaper and needed money for a trip to Helena. The newspaper went on to say:

[. . .] we warn our readers not to be taken in by such a swindle. No one has been employed by us. And if a stranger in Butte collects money in accordance with the above assertion, he does it under the assertion of false facts [. . .] such a rogue should be given over to the authorities.<sup>15</sup>

The German-Americans also felt no kinship with those who later swarmed to get their citizenship papers, when America's entrance into the war was imminent, because it was obviously done under false pretenses.

From New York comes the news that registration for acquiring citizenship in the last few days, on the part of Germans, has risen enormously. Frankly,



this kind of interest for American citizenship doesn't please us at all. These citizens of opportunity [Opportunitätsbürger] don't help the German cause; on the contrary, they harm it. Only people who became citizens, without feeling morally pressured, can be heard in influential places; whereas these "Kriegsgefahr-Bürger" will be seen as cowards or deserters by our enemies in the United States, and they can only hinder, not help us, in our battle which stands before us German-Americans.<sup>16</sup>

The Germans thought it imperative that they as a group obtain national recognition, since they, as equal and good American citizens, wanted their views and complaints to be heard. Whenever they made headway, especially in the political arena, they were overjoyed and did not hesitate to express it. A Mr. Heinrich Charles wrote in a letter to the editor:

The first success is here! President Wilson has finally pulled himself together to protest against the boundless infringements of the English at sea. He was induced to do this primarily because of upright German-Americans defending American honor, rights and real neutrality.[. . .] The political influence of the Germans and Irish, and the moral influence of the churches will be irresistible in Washington.<sup>17</sup>

How the Germans felt about politics will be discussed later in more detail, but the fact remains that they, after years of staying out of politics, now felt compelled to become more involved and take a definite stand on the issues. As was stated in one article:

[. . .] it is certain that a new era is decreed with the rapid growth of the German-American National Alliance, and the German community of the United States will no longer stay out of the field of political activity.[. . .] Pan-Germanism [Deutschthum], which slowly but surely through the national confederation was

prepared for its great mission, is awakened to the fullest understanding thereof. What is aimed at is the protection and defense of personal freedom.<sup>18</sup>

The one institution which enabled this feeling of solidarity to flourish among the Germans was their newspaper. It was their voice, their comfort, their sounding board. It was the link between separate individuals leading everyday lives and something greater--almost a guiding light.

Another publication which was very popular at the time was called The Fatherland, a magazine appearing weekly in the English language. According to some authorities it was the organ of the German-American National Alliance. It was pro-German, that is, it apparently attempted to publish the truth about the war, which was distorted by the English press. This article sent from a Texas newspaper expressed what their newspaper meant to the Germans:

The German community in America should now realize how important it is to possess a German press in this country. The times should be past, when Germans put their press in the background and give preference to the English press.[. . .] No German home should be without the German press.[. . .] Only in this way can the German community make its power felt in this country.<sup>19</sup>

In February of 1916, the vice-president of the National Alliance, Julius Moersch, wrote to Mr. Baurschmidt to praise him for his work in Montana.

I cannot leave Montana, without expressing my warmest thanks and recognition for the work you have performed in this state in the interest of the German-American National Alliance. The position of a newspaperman is difficult at best; that of a German newspaperman is twice as difficult--many more times as difficult and thankless. That you courageously and persistently fought against

difficulties and petty jealousy, is a merit which will be thankfully acknowledged on the part of the executive committee of the National Alliance. We thank you and your loyal colleagues for holding the German community of Montana together in the existing associations. You are facing a difficult struggle in your state. [. . .] <sup>20</sup>

In May of 1916, a Mr. Edward Dier of Butte wrote a letter supporting the Montana Staats-Zeitung in general, and its practice of printing some articles in English. He stated that such articles could not be found in a Butte paper, and if so, were only garbled. If written in English, the articles could be shown to an American on the side of the Allies. If this American does not believe the article because it is printed in a German newspaper, then the German knows the American is already too biased to understand or accept another point of view. The author goes on to say that the Montana Staats-Zeitung should be a family paper for the Germans and that in the future the paper should espouse the views of the German American National Alliance. There are not enough German newspapers to fight the hostile pro-English press. Important articles should be printed in both languages. One could ask his American neighbor to read them, without directly annoying him. The German could pretend he does not understand the article and ask his neighbor to explain it in English. In this way, the Montana Staats-Zeitung would accomplish its goal. The author of this article also felt the German newspaper had more worth than other papers, such as the Butte Miner and the Helena Independent, because it did not blindly accept the

pro-British reports of the Associated Press. Almost all German-language newspapers in the country stood behind the National Alliance and printed its opinions regarding peace and strict neutrality.

It is understandable that some native Americans felt threatened by this spirit of German unity in the United States, with war so close at hand. This spirit could easily be misconstrued as an evil one. Here is a typical statement made by John Tjarks, the chairman of the German-American National Alliance, which might have made Americans shudder:

[. . .] A unified German community is an absolute necessity in our new homeland. Who still resists the German-American National Alliance's endeavors for unity is an enemy and a traitor to his people.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the Germans felt compelled to consolidate to show their patriotism at this critical time. People of other nationalities and ethnic backgrounds joined them in their cause.

The Irish have sent invitations to the German clubs, to participate in their parade on St. Patrick's Day. The entire German community is invited, by the way, and since the Irish are the only friends of the Germans in this country, we should join en masse in the parade which will also be a demonstration [of our solidarity with the Irish].<sup>22</sup>

Of course since Helena was the capital, it was felt that this city should lead the Germans of the state in patriotic fervor. Charles Geier, the secretary of the local league in Helena, said in reference to a newly-founded league in Butte:

Shall Helena, the center of the German community, stand behind other cities in this movement? [. . .] Sooner or later we, as citi-

zens of our adopted Fatherland, will have to fight for our rights as American citizens and now is the best time to secure respect for the opinions of German-Americans, who have always shown themselves to be loyal citizens of the country.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly after America entered the war, the Montana Staats-Zeitung printed advice for its readers concerning the part they would play in the war effort:

Today hysterical suspicion and mistrust are turned on us, who have proven ourselves to be the best and most loyal [bewährtest] element in the United States. Never fear, the hour will come when they will call upon us again; when they will need an element to give direction to the reconstruction of the country after the war, when they will need the common sense of the German race, its joy in hard work, its sense of duty. Until then, we will have to heed that great saying, "Learn to bear patiently without complaint". But the time demands more than martial duty. The army of those who stay at home, the great number of those who must care for the needs of those fighting, and of those who do not fight themselves, calls everyone to ironclad duty. The German has always worked the land before, now he must do it even more vigorously. We now hear that only extensive land use can save this country from threatening need; not all the billions of this country will save it from starvation. [. . .] This is where the German-Americans must help, especially those in Montana. Congress will appropriate ample funds to support agriculture, so necessary now. Montana shall not be left empty-handed. In her boundless, fruitful valleys much more can be raised in the way of foodstuffs and livestock to feed the nation. [. . .]<sup>24</sup>

Most of the Germans were farmers, so they thought that doing what they had always done and knew best, was the way to serve their country in wartime. As will later be seen, this was sometimes in conflict with what the native-born Americans thought.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Hermann was a Germanic tribal leader used again and again in national propaganda. He won a major battle against the Roman invaders in 9 A.D.

<sup>2</sup>The German American National Alliance was a pro-German organization formed in 1901 by a federation of German societies in Pennsylvania. By 1911 it was the largest organization of any ethnic group in American history.

<sup>3</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, October 29, 1915, p.5. (G)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., November 5, 1915, p.5. (G)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., November 12, 1915, p.8. (G)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., May 26, 1916, p.1. (G)

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., May 23, 1913, p.6. (G)

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., July 16, 1915, p.8. (G)

<sup>9</sup>"Help for the Farmer," Montana Staats-Zeitung, August 2, 1917, p.3. (G)

<sup>10</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, October 30, 1914, p.7. (G)

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., January 29, 1915, p.7. The "Kriegsnot" rings were sold as tokens to those who contributed funds to help wartime refugees. (G)

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., November 19, 1915, p.8. (G)

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., May 12, 1916, p.8. (G)

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., November 6, 1914, p.6. (G)

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., November 13, 1914, p.7. (G)

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., February 8, 1917, p.5. "Kriegsgefahr-Bürger" were persons who became citizens because the United States might enter the war. (G)

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., January 22, 1915, p.6. (G)

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., November 6, 1914, p.6. (G)

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., November 20, 1914, p.6. (G)

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., February 4, 1916, p.4. (G)

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., December 18, 1914, p.6. (G)

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., February 12, 1915, p.7. (G)

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., October 29, 1915, p.8. (G)

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1917, p.6. (G)

### CHAPTER III

#### GERMAN POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND WORLD WAR I

In discussing the German-Americans it would be difficult to separate their views on the war and on political issues in general, since one was the result of the other. The Germans in this country virtually ignored politics until World War I broke out. In order to voice their opinions, they would need political representation.

It is absolutely necessary, considering the great number of candidates in the upcoming primary election, that the voters of German descent concentrate on one candidate for each office, if they wish for the German element to be represented in the main election with one candidate. [. . .] for once, put party differences aside and vote for the best man.<sup>1</sup>

The German-Americans had many grievances to air during the war in Europe, and the following article summarized most of their feelings about the war and their reasons for taking a stand in politics:

The attempt to deliver the United States into the keeping of England by the Tory element which controls the American press in New York and occupies seats in the cabinet of President Wilson, has thrilled the great mass of non-Anglican American citizens fiber and bone, and opened the eyes of all neutral Americans of whatever descent to the danger which menaces the country if this state of affairs continues [. . .] The fact that millions of Americans who denounce England as the selfish instigator of the war are organizing for an aggressive campaign of deliverance has impelled certain



public organs, who are under suspicion of being in the pay of the British Foreign Office to ask for what are we organizing?

1. To assert and maintain our dignity as citizens of the United States.
2. To break the power of England upon our government[. . .]our public servants.
3. To secure absolute neutrality, to stop the shipment of arms to one belligerent at the expense of the other; to stop financing the war for Russia and France; to stop the hypocrisy of praying for peace one day and furthering the cause of a murderous war other days.
4. To emancipate ourselves from the blight of an unrepresentative, corrupt and un-American press, fed and inspired by London and subservient to the London censor; to secure the election to Congress, and to all public offices, of representatives who are in sympathy with us.
5. To place the German wireless service on the same footing as the British cables.
6. To hold President Wilson to his definition of the law of neutrality as solemnly proclaimed by him at the beginning of the war[. . .]
7. To bring the administration back to the position of 1812 when we declared war against England rather than submit to national humiliation such as we are experiencing now.
8. To demand the right for the United States to purchase ships when and where it likes, to carry the products of our fields, mines and factories to foreign ports, regardless of Great Britain.

Every American who is in sympathy with this movement should fall into line. The nucleus exists in the German-American Alliance of Philadelphia with a membership of 2,000,000. Every town and city should have a local branch to enroll new members and circulate the truth. Thousands of pamphlets are ready for distribution, bearing on all questions of the war. By uniting with local associations, the element which is in sympathy with the cause of Germany and Austria-Hungary can exercise the balance of power in many districts and bring the American people misled by the poisoned organs of the London Foreign Office, to an attitude of fair play.<sup>2</sup>

The German-Americans took a stand in other areas of politics as well. This basically began in 1914 with the impending threat of prohibition, to which they were staunchly opposed. The thought of it was absurd to them--it did not

exist in Europe, and it was a grave infringement on personal life and freedom.

The supporters of Prohibition have shown at every opportunity, that they hate nothing more than the German community clubs and ethnic associations, the strong support of liberal points of view and the strong protection of the individual's right of self-determination. Whoever wants to keep it must vote on election day for liberal legislative and congressional candidates and against all regulations for limitation of our personal freedom.<sup>3</sup>

The Montana Staats-Zeitung also dealt with prohibition in humorous ways to get its point across. Here is a poem which appeared in the paper in 1915:

The state was dry, and so was I  
But as I walked around  
Some old blind tigers I could spy  
Where whiskey could be found.  
I entered one and asked for booze  
The keeper said to me:  
Just look around and you can choose  
Your brand from what you see.  
I looked around and there I found  
Train oil and japalac  
Carbolic acid, liquid glue  
Wood alcohol, shellac  
Strong turpentine and lizard stew  
All for two bits a crack.  
The keeper said: This stuff is stout  
Although it may taste queer  
But when you take your drink, get out,  
For you can't die in here.<sup>4</sup>

In another issue there were photographs of soldiers at home in Germany, who naturally had no such problem as prohibition.

Here were some of the captions:

1. A "wet" message from home; Bavarians getting their fresh Munich beer at the Western Front.
2. From the above photograph it will be seen that schnapps is the favorite beverage at the front as well as at home.
3. The above picture shows the variety of beverages used by both nurses and surgeons in the efficient ambulance corps at the front.

4. The above picture depicts a scene among the German wounded soldiers. It will be seen that stimulants form an important part in the lives of the convalescents.<sup>5</sup>

Not much was mentioned in the paper about women's suffrage except that the German American National Alliance in principle was not against it. The Alliance would support women's suffrage, if it proved to be helpful solely for German women who had liberal points of view. But the Alliance felt that the majority of American women were animated by another spirit. They were referred to as "born tyrants and therefore always inclined to reduce the personal freedom of the male members of society."<sup>6</sup>

The German-Americans were very upset over the issue of shipment of arms and munitions to the Allies, especially to England, while at the same time, America supposedly proclaimed neutrality. They felt that America was a nation of hypocrits if it gave war material to Russia, France and England knowing that Germany and Austria-Hungary were getting none. A man from Chinook wrote a letter to the newspaper expressing the opinion of most local Germans:

It's no wonder that a German's blood boils when he stands at a train station and sees trains go by with munitions bound for Russia[. . .] sometimes an uneducated American or deceitful Englishman fabricates his lying tales at the expense of German honor, culture and strength; well, such people who invent fairy tales might consider that the "Great Times" [gewaltige Stunde] are not favorable to the teller of stories.

Who knows if we Germans will not be needed again, when the United States must again be americanized; should this be repeated in our history, then let us take care that the German name remains respected; let us not again create an America for England.[. . .]<sup>7</sup>

Similar reports came from Europe. The police chief in Dresden strictly forbade the pastor of the English settlement there to pray for the victory of the English arms. To make sure that instructions were followed, policemen who understood English were present at every church service.

The issue concerning neutrality made the Germans angry, and they consequently got themselves into trouble for denouncing President Wilson in this matter.

Answering a telegram sent to him by Jeremiah O'Leary, the clever president of the American Truth Society in New York, the President has again lost his temper and has wired O'Leary that he would be mortified to receive his vote and those of the other disloyal Americans of his kind. Why this slap in the face of millions of Americans, mostly of Irish and German descent, who rightfully claim that they are as loyal to the United States as its President, and that Woodrow Wilson has no right to denounce them because they differ with him in the opinion of how this country should be governed and how it should live up to its duty of strict neutrality?<sup>8</sup>

As a result of this, the publisher of the New York Staats-Zeitung formed a committee of 5000 German democrats to fight Wilson's re-election. All the leading German democratic newspapers broke with him, stating that no respectable German or Austrian could vote for Wilson, without branding himself as a traitor to the country of his birth.

The German-Americans disliked the democratic administration in general. They believed the Democratic Party was taking advantage of the war situation by claiming that the high prices were the result of their administration. "But every farmer knows that he had to sell his crops with-

out profit at 62 cents a bushel before the war, and as soon as the war broke out, the farmer received \$1.00 a bushel."<sup>9</sup> The Germans also complained about the enforced war taxes to aid American industries. They could not understand what the United States Treasury should have to do with the European war. The newspaper claimed that this was the first Congress in our history which demanded war taxes during peace time and spent more than any previous Congress. It had promised not to harm any legitimate industries, and to lower the cost of living and unemployment, which it did not do.

Several articles appeared in the Montana Staats-Zeitung defending the sinking of the Lusitania, which seen from the German point of view, could be justified. The Germans thought Britain got what she deserved.

When in February of this year the Lusitania went through Irish waters and hoisted the Stars and Stripes for protection against attack by German submarines, instead of travelling under its own flag, it earned its death blow. Naturally the loss of so many passengers is to be regretted. But they took their fate into their own hands when they boarded the ship in New York, because already long before, the German ambassador, Graf von Bernstorff had warnings printed in the press, to inform the American public about the danger of using English and French steamers. War is war, and whoever ventures into danger must bear the consequences. The Lusitania was an English ship; it had war munitions as cargo and English and French reservists were on board. Several passengers from Butte were on the torpedoed Lusitania.<sup>10</sup>

A Mr. L. M. Norman submitted a letter to the newspaper blaming the President for this great misfortune. In his opinion the Lusitania was a floating arsenal, carrying ammunition made in America and transporting American citizens as mascots to in-

sure safety and immunity from attack. The mascots simply hid their enmity behind a neutral mask. It was felt that Britain's policy of starving a whole nation (Germany) was far worse. The President and the Secretary of State should have done their duty by warning their citizens of the danger of not boarding a neutral vessel.

Other attacks were made on the President and on executive power in general. By doing this, the German-Americans were putting themselves in a precarious position, because by attacking the government in any form, regardless of the reason, they were pinpointed as "disloyal". One such article came out as a rebuttal to the attitude that the citizens should keep quiet and let the government run the country:

If that were so then every National Presidential Campaign [sic] is a national crime against the executive of the United States, who is criticized, attacked and opposed either for his own reelection or for the election of the successor he indorses. Mr. Roosevelt who, having been the executive officer of the United States, and therefore should know [sic] what the duty towards that office is, has criticized the Mexican politics of Mr. Wilson in the most bitter manner. Mr. Taft had stated that it is the duty of every citizen to uphold the President in foreign matters, because he may know something what [sic] we do not know. [. . .] The American sovereign people are led to believe the President has information about daily happenings in the international situations, on which he decides each case as it comes up. We are led to believe he is unhampered and unshackled, free to do as he sees fit. [. . .] It is the citizen's duty to oppose as much as possible, by all legal means, a course he considers dangerous, and against America's best interests. [. . .]<sup>11</sup>

In June of 1917, the issue of registration came up and some unfortunate incidents took place. The German news-

paper printed an article stating that Representative Taylor in Washington submitted a resolution which would render immigrants expatriated if they refused to register. Those who fled the country to avoid registration would not be allowed to return.

In the course of one hour, twenty-seven inhabitants of the city [Butte] were arrested since they didn't register on Tuesday. One assumes that many more people avoided registration.

A parade of around 500 to 600 men and women moved through the streets of the city on the evening of registration day. A flag was carried with the inscription, "Down with the War!". There was loud jeering against registration and forced recruitment.

[. . .] Police officers arrested the leaders, whereupon, the women present began to scratch the officers' [faces]. Several shots were heard but no one was injured.

Order was established only after the National Guard arrived with lowered bayonets from nearby barracks. More arrests were made. The city is as good as under martial law.<sup>12</sup>

Such unrest as demonstrated here was commonplace during the war years at home.

All the issues that were debated and criticized in the German as well as in other newspapers, pointed to basically one concern for the German community. They wanted desperately for America to stay out of the war, and they feared for their own security. In March, 1917, a letter was sent to Senators Walsh and Meyers, and to the representatives, by Mr. Baurschmidt and Charles Geier, president and secretary respectively of the Independent Citizens' League:

The Independent Citizens' League of Montana representing over 10,000 voters respectfully petitions and urges you to do all in your power to

avoid the passing of any measures by Congress which may lead us into war with any European nation. We believe that our national honor is not at stake in the controversy caused by the present state of submarine warfare. The principles of humanity and international law have so frequently and openly been violated by all the belligerents that taking issue at this time would naturally force us into war with all European nations.<sup>13</sup>

Innumerable editorials were written, either informing the Germans about where they could read the "truth" about the war, or slamming the pro-British, American press. "Many Germans here appear not yet to be awakened out of their sleep, or they are so--God's wrath upon them!-- [gottsträfllich] 'americanized' that they must blow into the same horn as the American press. Sad, but true!"<sup>14</sup>

In New York, through the German-American Literary Defense Committee, the Printers and Publishers Association formed to publish a daily newspaper in English for the strict protection of American interests against the unneutral, pro-English, New York press.<sup>15</sup>

The Montana Staats-Zeitung advertised brochures giving the "real" truth about events in the war and its causes; 10 per cent of the money from sales went into a support fund for the Fatherland. Another publication which the Germans believed to be the only unbiased one printed in English was called Fair Play.

The Montana Staats-Zeitung attacked other Montana papers for printing lies, and siding with Britain.

In order to show your readers in what spiteful and malicious ways different papers in Montana insult and offend the German community, allow me to bring a few editorial remarks to mind which give an indication to what excessive degrees the slan-



derous newspaper propaganda [Zeitungshetze] has developed in this state against the Germans. [. . .] "Butte Miner: The last crime which was committed against 'Civilization' and against which every feeling for humanity revolts in the hearts of civilized men, was the execution of Fräulein Cavell, an English nurse in Belgium. Although the way was already paved for this brutal act by a long list of barbaric deeds, this last crime will long remain in living memory after the war, to bring shame and contempt to the children's children of those who today call themselves German."<sup>16</sup>

The Germans had to keep abreast of criticisms of their own articles written in German, lest they be misunderstood or misinterpreted through translation. This reprint in the newspaper from J. J. Meyer at the University of Chicago is a prime example:

For the enlightenment of R. L. Metcalfe, who in his limitless German hatred, reprinted in his Nebraska the stupid story appearing in some of the American papers and magazines, even in the so-called magazine for the intellectuals, the Literary Digest--that the Germans use the body of the fallen to obtain fats and fertilizer-- we reprint the following letter: "In the name of common sense and everyday decency, I ask your permission to say a few words about the preposterous charge against the Germans that they use the bodies of the fallen to obtain from them fats, glycerin, fertilizer etc. This translation by the London Times (corpse utilization establishment) which has been reprinted by many other papers, is correct, apart from the all-important rendering of Kadaver-Verwertungsanstalt. Kadaver does not mean "corpse", but only and exclusively the carcass of a dead animal, as everybody knows who is conversant with German. . . now, it goes without saying that dictionaries of modern languages are very deceptive guides. . . Leiche means "corpse" and only this, except when prefixed by Tier or the name of some animal. Kadaver, on the other hand, nowadays never means anything but a dead animal."<sup>17</sup>

This must have been a delicious piece of propaganda for the enemies of Germany.

The following are quotations from editorials in English which expressed both the deep-seated anti-British sentiment of the German-Americans, and their desire to defend German unity in America. These articles reveal the typical propagandistic style of editorials of the time--sensational and emotional--some perhaps verging on libel.

The attack on Germany is an outrageous invasion, a wanton ambush instigated and supported by England for no other reason but to crush an honest competitor, a nation that asked for nothing else but to be left alone in working hard to make a living. No, says England to Germany, you have no right to exist. I'll crush you as I have crushed Holland's trade when it began to compete with me; I'll crush you as I crushed Denmark when, in times of peace with that nation, I suddenly and without warning pounced upon that country's fleet and destroyed it; I'll crush you without any earthly cause unless it be a brutal selfish one. I'll crush you just as I crush India by draining her wealth and starving her population; I'll crush everyone and every race and every nation that I please to crush, and in doing this I shall be governed by the principle that the end sanctify the means; I'll starve German men, women and children whose homes are in England; I'll starve even the children and women of Belgium, my own ally. . . yes, I'll let them starve rather than to run the risk of seeing a morsel of those foodstuffs get into German hands; I'll commit high treason on the white race by enlisting in my army all the savages and half-savage tribes in a fight against Germans, a kindred race, just as I created opportunities for the American Indians to massacre the colonists. [. . .] But why should I continue in the enumeration of atrocities committed by me, and which I intend to commit in order to satisfy my morbid lust for world domination? Every civilized (?) country speaks approvingly of my acts. [. . .] 18

The following editorial was written originally by George Viereck in the Fatherland, a pro-German publication in New York, and reprinted in the Montana Staats-Zeitung in

praise of the German-Americans:

With studious moderation the representatives of our German-American population, meeting with their fellows in Washington, restrained their natural prejudices and their just indignation. If the resolutions adopted were to reflect German-American opinion, they would be ten times more emphatic. [. . .] Evidently it is the mission of the German-Americans to bring their adopted country, misled and misrepresented by its newspapers, back to authentic Americanism.

The German-American has always stood for the spirit of righteousness in American politics, independent, free of party ties; he has fought his battles singly. For that reason he was often defeated by the combined forces of corruption. The German-Americans have learned this lesson. They will henceforth fight as a unit. You may, if you choose, call us hyphenated Americans. We are not sure that, as American patriots, we welcome the drawing of ethnic distinctions. But who is to blame if the German-American element consolidates, except the Tory editors of obscene sheets of the stripe of Harper's Weekly and Life and the pro-ally dailies? Their sneers and insults have at least neutralized the contrifugal [*sic*] forces so deeply rooted in the character of the German.

We are tired of playing the part of Cinderella in American politics. We claim our seat at the banquet table [. . .] We shall rewrite the word "American" to the extent of our power, in terms of our own ethnic complexion [. . .] We shall see to it that in the equation of the future our worth shall be written down in proper proportion. [. . .] We are better Americans than George Hauen Putnam, once of England, and other camp-followers of the British cause who seek to introduce British snobbery into American life. Our patience is at an end. [. . .] If your sympathies were honestly with the Allies, you should at least have observed a decent regard for our feelings, the feelings of those whose immediate kinsmen were dying like flies in battle, slain by American dum-dum bullets and rifles. You have called our brothers by the vilest names; you have spat upon the memories of our mothers. You have trampled upon the graves of our fathers. You have sown the storm, you shall reap the whirlwind.

Now the ballot shall speak for us. We shall go into the arena of politics. We shall beat you at your own game. 170 members of Congress are of

Irish extraction. There is no reason why they should not be joined by 170 of German extraction.<sup>19</sup>

We are tired of being tolerated, patronized, spoken of as "good, law-abiding, peaceful citizens", as though we had no other claim to regard, no right to an opinion that is not formed for us by the Boston school.[. . .] We had our share in the settlement of this country; we helped to develop it, cultivate it, educate it and fight for it. We helped to make its history and are entitled to something more than toleration.[. . .] We come of a race whose efficiency is the marvel of the world, whose science has made for the happiness of all nations, whose songs and poetry are the inheritance of the whole world.[. . .] We come of a race of inventors, pathfinders, fighters. We are builders and artists, merchants and writers, but we are not politicians. That is our one weakness. We have been content to serve instead of to govern.[. . .] 20

From this rhetoric one can understand why the native-born Americans feared the Germans' feeling of superiority and alleged desire to take over the world.

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, August 25, 1916, p.6. (G)
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., January 29, 1915, p.6. (E)
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., October 30, 1914, p.2. (G)
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., June 18, 1915, p.2. (E)
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., February 4, 1916, pp. 4-5. (E)
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., March 12, 1915, p.12. (G)
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., January 22, 1915, p.7. (G)
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., October 6, 1916, p.1. (E)
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., October 30, 1914, p.6. (G)
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., May 14, 1915, p.6. (G)
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., July 16, 1915, p.2. (E)
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., June 14, 1917, p.3. (G)
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., March 1, 1917, p.1. (E)
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., December 11, 1914, p.12. (G)
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., April 9, 1915, p.12. (G)
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., November 19, 1915, p.4. (G)
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., June 14, 1917, p.1. (E)
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., January 8, 1915, p.6. (E)
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., February 26, 1915, p.6. (E)
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., January 8, 1915, p.6. (E)

## CHAPTER IV

### PATRIOTISM OR TREASON?

The most important question which was asked of the German-Americans before and during the war, was where did their loyalties really lie? Did they remain steadfast and loyal to the country of their birth, or did they stand behind America as American citizens? Native-born Americans said they could not be half and half. They must be either completely German or American--either black or white. It is a difficult question to deal with, as it must have been very hard for the foreign-born citizens themselves. Native Americans, that is, neither foreign-born nor of foreign extraction, called these people "hyphenated-citizens", which of course was resented. After all, America was a melting pot. The fact is, there is evidence to prove their loyalty to both countries. One wonders if perhaps they suddenly took a turn towards the American side, when the United States entered the war, for the sake of their own survival, and thus under false pretenses as proof of loyalty. The German-Americans did in fact stand behind America at that time, not necessarily because they thought Germany was in the wrong, but because they, as American citizens, had established their priorities and America came first on the list. The majority of them

remained loyal, even under persecution and pressure.

First to be considered is the evidence substantiating German-American loyalty to the Fatherland--Germany. Naturally, most of the material appeared in the newspaper before America entered the war. Below are the translations of several letters from German relatives, meant to make the readers here feel closer to the war situation and sympathetic towards the German cause. An excerpt from a soldier's letter read: "Why, you should have seen that--German courage, Germanic wrath and the Gallic hoard struck down by the Cheruscan blow. . . yes, the German is invincible because each one is a hero."<sup>1</sup>

With one single, valiant jolt, the entire German nation raised itself to indescribably glorious deeds. Not one stayed behind, who was called to the flag. But aside from the millions of trained soldiers, reservists, militia and Home Guard [Landwehr und Landsturm] who, filled with inspiration, devotion and loyalty, dutifully enlisted, 1,200,000 more German youths and men volunteered for the defense of the Fatherland, during the first ten days of this lonely August moon. They cannot yet be quartered in the army; no matter how much the volunteers want to be admitted, indeed beg to be admitted. It is a mighty performance, worthy of that of the fathers of 1813 [when Napoleon was defeated at the Battle of Leipzig]. Of all the nations on earth, only Germany could rise to such deeds, because Germany has remained the mighty fortress of idealism and must remain so, always and forever. It has not yet been corrupted by the materialistic tendency of modern times; it has not yet sunk into luxury and greed, even though it has become one of the richest countries of the world. It hasn't yet developed the type of "goody-goody sweet boy", does not see a higher being in every chattering petticoat; it also hasn't surrendered the instruction of its male youth to the influences of female teachers. The German youth has remained a man. [. . .]<sup>2</sup>

A woman in Dresden wrote to one Else Kluge in November, 1914:

Often I have read that you in America get the lying reports of our enemies and that our real news releases never reach you; therefore, I want to give you an illustration of our brave troops. [. . .] You can be proud, Else, to be a German child[. . .] I hope my letter will reach you. But if it should fall into enemy hands, they will at least see what a German thinks of them.<sup>3</sup>

A letter sent to Americans from Bonn opened with:

You outside, you receive English and French news.[. . .] In Belgium atrocities were committed against defenseless women and children of deported [ausgewiesener] Germans. Thousands of Germans lived in Antwerp and Brussels. Their houses were plundered and robbed before a German soldier had even touched a Belgian city.[. . .]<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Heinrich Blume from Clancy received the following letter from Hamburg and sent it on to the newspaper:

My dear brother, the war has claimed the first sacrifice from us. Our boy Kurt fell on January thirty-first. So that you will see that he was a brave German and worthy of our name, I am enclosing a copy of Walther's letter. This letter shows you the spirit of my home, but also the spirit as is common with the German people. We are prepared for anything. Every man is prepared to sacrifice, to hunger and to die. As our Lord God has determined the fate of the individual, so be it; the one true God above has good intentions for all our people. Germany, if united, has never yet been defeated. We stand behind our Kaiser in hardship and even in death. In the night at three o'clock Kurt wrote me that there would be an attack in the morning; he wanted to be fresh and fit and sleep some more and he closed his letter with, "with God, Heinrich". Such is the stuff of German soldiers. Peacefully they sleep before the attack and then--with God.[. . .] We bore and raised our children not for us but rather for the Fatherland.<sup>5</sup>

The next letter was written by an American just returning from a trip abroad:

We Americans don't know this spirit. Perhaps it moved the hearts of our fathers in the Civil



War.[. . .] As we Americans recognized these virtues of the German people, we had to take sides with the Germans.[. . .] We saw in Berlin how German-Americans came together to fight for Kaiser and Empire; yes, we met a young American who was so enthusiastic for Germany that he wanted unconditionally to join the German army.<sup>6</sup>

The newspaper was most pleased to print letters or editorials written by native-born Americans speaking out on Germany's behalf.

Professor George Stuart Fullerton of the Department of Philosophy of Columbia University, now honorary exchange professor at the University of Vienna, has written a pamphlet in which he attempts to make clear as an American to Americans the reasons and justice for Germany's entry into the war, and to prove that the people of this country would have acted in the same way if the United States were geographically beset by the same dangers from abroad as was Germany.

Professor Fullerton explains at the start that he is an American without a drop of German blood in his veins, and cannot, therefore, be suspected of the partiality that characterizes the German-American. But he professes to have a thorough knowledge of German conditions and sentiment, from thirty years of study of Germany's science, literature, political and economic development, and his acquaintance with many leading persons in political and private life there.

"I say without hesitation that no class, either in Germany or Austria desired to precipitate this terrible war," he says. "Peace was desired for economic reasons. But war was forced upon both nations.[. . .]"

The Germans are a peace-loving people. We Americans know that there is no element in our own population more orderly, industrious and law-abiding than the German element. . ."

Professor Fullerton asks Americans to imagine the United States for a time differently situated geographically, with peaceful Canada and weak Mexico replaced by two strong and martial nations, one like Russia, vast and powerful, with a constantly manifested tendency to territorial spread and growth at the expense of its neighbors; the other, like France, impelled by a self-confessed spirit of revenge

and hankering for nearly half a century to regain its lost provinces from its neighbor. "Then," he continues, "another power should be imagined, capable of controlling all our outlets to the sea.

Navalism can be a more serious menace than militarism, for the latter threatens chiefly one's more immediate neighbors. Navalism holds a threat over every nation on the face of the globe.

We are neutrals, but we have a right to know the truth about Central Europe. It is not right that we should be kept in ignorance, or led through misrepresentations, to condemn, in haste, nations with which we stand in friendly relations."<sup>7</sup>

The German community was equally quick to assail anyone or any group they felt voiced unfair and biased criticism directed at their people or the Fatherland. The next editorial, with a more scholarly approach, was a prime example:

#### Fair and Honest Criticism Appreciated

Convincing proof is supplied almost daily that more rot has been said and written, and that more lies have been told about Germany, by the hostile camp, since the outbreak of the European war than could possibly be compressed in a work of the size of the Encyclopedia Britannica. We are struck with the fact that the utterances which find expression in the major portion of the American press show an amazing ignorance of German institutions in particular and European conditions in general. But it remained for a professor of the Columbia University, Franklin H. Giddings, to announce his candidacy for the lunatic asylum in predicting all sorts of dire results, almost too puerile to mention, should Germany be victorious; and in virtually asserting that one million German soldiers, or whatever small fraction is left after the war, will roam over the oceans and all continents, and kill off the whole world if it refuses to submit to the German's way of thinking.

Says Giddings, "Germany has developed along materialistic lines, is steeped in the teachings of Nietzsche [*sic*], Treitschke and Bernhardt; has become Prussianized"--whatever that may prove to be when interpreted with intelligent regard for the unexcelled progress made by Germany in every field of human activity. "Moreover, it will compel America to become a militaristic nation, and

the spirit of democracy and liberal thought will be utterly crushed." Self-stultification could be carried to no greater extreme.

German militarism, Prussianism, brought to the front, not to say coined for the occasion by England, by "good old England" whose determination to rule the entire world we must acknowledge as a divine right or else be denounced as enemies of any and all republican institutions, are terms repeated parrot-like by everybody incapable of thinking for himself.

.....  
German militarism, Prussianism, are terms which, considered in the light of actual facts, are merely bogies designedly cast into the world by the enemies of Germany to frighten the thoughtless and ignorant. This assertion is based on the fact, which Giddings, at least, as a professor of sociology, ought to know if he knows anything at all; he certainly ought to know that the fundamental principles of applied sociology have found in no other country as ready entrance as in Germany, whose banner carries the motto: "One for all and all for one", which expresses as no other phrase does, not merely the most consistent but the noblest thought of true democracy, of the true brotherhood of man.

Giddings, with an untold number of other shallow would-be instructors, denounces the political and social institutions of Germany, and of course, in misjudging them in exposing his striking ignorance of same, draws of necessity conclusions worthy of the intelligence of a weak-minded child rather than that of a professor.

For the proof: Nobody denies Germany's pre-eminent economic development. [. . .] Despite its limited natural resources, despite its small territory, its crowded population, its economic development over-shadows that of any other country; "makes the United States look rather commonplace", as one anti-german [emphasis in original] American journalist recently put it. It succeeded in establishing its economic supremacy through the very political and social institutions denounced by such superficial thinkers as Giddings; thinkers who are incapable of seeing that their own logic is pierced by praising Germany's economic greatness, while at the same time denouncing the very means--its social and political institutions--by which this greatness and Germany's phenomenal position in the world concert was achieved.

[. . .] Hence to denounce, particularly in the absurd manner resorted to at present, the institutions of a nation that has best succeeded in

the solution of burning social problems, such as every modern state is confronted by, and in the practical and efficient application of the remedies found, shows either downright prejudice or rude thoughtlessness saturated with a goodly portion of ignorance.

Fair criticism of the institutions of Germany, such as intelligent and honest minds delight in--be they even those of opponent--are not merely courted but even sincerely appreciated by the German race.<sup>8</sup>

The Montana Staats-Zeitung continually beseeched its readers to outwardly show their loyalty to Germany. They were urged to attend meetings of the German American National Alliance and bring their American friends who sympathized with the German cause.

Wake up you Germans. The necessity for Germans all over the world to stand by their Fatherland has never before been greater, nor will it ever be greater in the future. Even though we are American citizens, it is our sacred duty to fight so that our old Fatherland receives justice and the same treatment as other nations. This is something that we as American citizens can demand and must insist upon.<sup>9</sup>

The German newspaper printed an equal if not greater quantity of material supporting the fact that the German-Americans were really and ultimately loyal to the United States, when it came down to which country they would actually defend and fight for. The articles expressing their allegiance to this country were quite convincing. One can understand that the German community spoke out for Germany originally, because it had families and friends fighting across the ocean against the Allies receiving arms from the United States. Its feelings of anger were justifiable. Here are the translations of several articles in which the

German-Americans defended themselves as loyal American citizens. The first one, in the form of a warning, was entitled,

Endure--Hold Out--and Hold your Tongue:

After the leading American press, which has never shown any special friendship for the foreign-born population, unanimously declared that the loyalty of the American citizen of German origin is not to be doubted, it can be expected with certainty, that the German-American here need not anticipate any persecution or harassment during the war. All that will be expected is that they, as any other American citizen, fulfill their duty fully and completely, no more, no less. [ . . . ]

Also, German citizens that reside here will be able to attend to their business undisturbed as long as they do not offend anyone. However, any careless word very frequently can cause offense.

Any agitation or simply open criticism against the measures of the government can ultimately be taken as "aiding the enemy". The punishment for treason may be death, and imprisonment in milder cases.

Any activity in the interest of Germany will be seen as espionage, and in the case of war this crime is punishable by death.

But we all know that the loyalty of Americans of German descent is steadfast. The Germans will help themselves and their Fatherland the most when they, during the coming events, in search for a strong German word--das Maul halten [keep their traps shut]. Whoever cannot hold his tongue, has only himself to blame for the consequences.<sup>10</sup>

The next article from a 1915 edition, came out in English:

But we must not forget one thing now. The average German in this country loves the stars and stripes. He is a patriotic, useful and well-behaved citizen. He is a home builder and a taxpayer. And he is consistent. We have in this country men and women from every country in the world, and they are adapting themselves to American conditions. Their children and our children will grow up together, attend the same schools and take up the problems of life after us. We all come of stock that crossed the seas to find civil and religious liberty here, and the time never came when we needed men to fight when the foreign-born citizens quailed, and they offered up their

sons on the altar of American patriotism with a fervor that looked godlike. They have all contributed to our glory, if you take the time to look at history, the German, Irish, French and Polish especially. But because of the failure of some of our people to reflect sufficiently I want to refer to the German in particular. He has offered himself at every dark hour as a defender of the stars and stripes, and he has rendered a good accounting of himself every time. There were Schuyler, Herkheimer, Baron Steuben, DeKalb and Muellenberg as great patriots in the War of the Revolution. [. . .] The pages of American history are covered with the glory of German achievement. [. . .] Let's be fair to all nationalities. Let's look at the matter from the other fellow's viewpoint. [. . .] <sup>11</sup>

At a mass meeting of German-Americans in Great Falls, several German-Americans gave speeches concerning their obligations to this country. One such speaker was a John Schmit from Lewistown:

His speech was inspired by real patriotism. [. . .] With reference to his native state of Wisconsin, he insured those present of his loyalty to this country. "We promote," continued Mr. Schmit, "no German propaganda which would conflict with our duty as citizens of this glorious country. This is not a meeting of Germans, but rather a meeting of Americans of German origin. [. . .] Whoever had love and respect for the law in his mother country, can also be regarded as an orderly person and a good patriot in the country of his new home. Whoever did not learn patriotism in Germany, will also fail the test here. We, having proven through our deeds that we are patriotic Americans, are blamed because we sympathize with the country of our fathers, only because the Allies have sworn to devastate that magnificent country. Traitors we are called, only because we protest against ammunition destined to murder our brothers in large numbers. [. . .] <sup>12</sup>

This meeting ended with the singing of both The Star Spangled Banner and the Wacht am Rhein.

During these difficult times, the German people looked to Dr. Hexamer and Julius Moersch for guidance.

They were the president and vice-president of the German American National Alliance based in Philadelphia, and they were very influential with the entire German-American community. In an appeal made to this community in the Northwest in 1917, Moersch spoke about the unjust accusations that these people were disloyal and more German than American:

In this critical hour it is especially urgent to preserve presence of mind, peace and dignity.

No person in his right mind will blame us for carrying love and respect in our hearts for the land of our fathers, and to express it through emergency aid and charity.

Whenever the United States government declares war on another country, whether rightly or wrongly, then it is the duty of every American citizen to comply with the government's measures. A higher power and world history will judge whether the declaration of war was right or wrong.

Should, however, America declare war on Germany, then we, too, as German-Americans have only one obligation, and that is, to STAND BY THE FLAG OF OUR COUNTRY [Emphasis in original]. Our hearts may bleed to death [verbluten] or break over it, but that does not change the obligation we owe to our adopted country. [ . . . ]

We will always be proud of our German heritage, and never be ashamed of it, [ . . . ] but to the country of our new home where our children were born we pledge unerring loyalty, without openly boasting our allegiance or fawning.<sup>13</sup>

This statement was accepted more readily than that made by Dr. Hexamer in the same context. In the name of millions of Germans he announced that in the event of war, money collected for the German Red Cross would be turned over to the American Red Cross. It was expected that all local leagues would stand behind him, and that individual contributors would not protest against such action. He would stand completely behind the United States if it came to war, but he

also felt that a country should not enter war without first holding a referendum.

One seemingly far-fetched idea came out in this English article in 1917, disclosing a different approach to patriotism:

Congress has before it a proposition that instead of lending billions to Great Britain, we should purchase Canada from them. This may be a dream but it points to that magnificent country from the northpol [sic] to the Panama Canal which in the hope of many is the destiny of the United States. But whether this will be the immediate consequence or not, the United States will emerge from this war as a greater and stronger unit. The Statelines will be of still less importance and a powerful country, independent from every other country on this globe, will come in existence able to rid itself of all influences from outside and inside and which will be in a strong position to make the world understand what it means, when it says, "America first and America only."<sup>14</sup>

The German-Americans stood up for their newspapers as well as for their people:

[. . .] America's very existence is the best evidence of the fallacy of the theory, that states can be formed only by a uniform nation.[. . .] These instances may be sufficient to establish the fact that a uniform language is not an essential requisite of patriotism. This is a full and complete justification in itself of the existence of a press conducted in a foreign language.[. . .] The German-American press of America is [sic]in existence for over 170 years and during all those long years the 550 newspapers published in this language have never had any other object but to make of their readers good American citizens, and to urge them to learn the English state language of the United States as fast as possible [. . .] the contention that the German-American press is to be blamed for the small representation of the German-Americans in congress [sic] and in other official positions, is therefore an unqualified and barefaced falsehood. Every German paper in America has joined some party just the same as the English papers, and the German press has



worked for Republicans as well as for Democrats. [. . .] <sup>15</sup>

What the German-Americans detested more than anything was being labeled "hyphenated citizens".

Who is in reality "hyphenated"? Who cleared the virgin forests from Pennsylvania in the East to Nebraska and the Dakotas in the West? Who ploughed up the prairie, sowed the seed and provided huge harvests, which made the United States the supplier to the rest of the world? German muscle did it!

Who obtains citizenship immediately upon coming to this land? One would be surprised at studying the census reports: The immigrants from England provide the lowest percentage; the German immigrants hold the highest.

And who remains in the country of his choice even when he comes into prosperity? Who, however, sends his children to France and England? Who lives in gay Paris? Who adopts the English customs? Who contributes more to America's prosperity, the simple craftsman and laborer, the small, industrious businessman, or the "true" American on Wall Street [. . .] who squanders and wastes the hard-earned money of the simple man in wild speculations?<sup>16</sup>

The next letter was one of the very few appearing in the newspaper, in which a German-American citizen expressed his loyalty here, by denouncing the actions of his fellow Germans. It was written by Mr. Nathan Loeser, a lawyer from Cleveland, Ohio:

Gentlemen:

I will ask you to discontinue sending me any further copies of the Waechter und Anzeiger. I am wholly out of sympathy with the brutal, savage and wholly unjustifiable kind of warfare which Germany is conducting, and which has culminated in the sending of President Wilson's note to the German Government.

The American people must act as a unit today in support of the President's position. Instead of standing by the President, you are sowing the seed of discord among the German American people.

I am of German parentage, but I do not allow this fact to warp my views from what I believe to be the path of fairness and justice.

The first duty of every citizen is loyalty to the United States and support of its Executive Officers.

Very truly,  
Nathan Loeser<sup>17</sup>

The German-American community demonstrated its loyalty by active participation. The people supported concerts in conjunction with the Red Cross, attended loyalty parades, defended the formation of the Home Guard and bought Liberty Bonds. At a typical concert, held in March 1915, by the lodge of the Sons of Hermann, The Star Spangled Banner was sung and the closing remark made was: "We must feel love for our friends in Germany, and respect and admiration for the Teutonic race, but nevertheless, we are all Americans, first, last and always."<sup>18</sup>

A Home Guard was formed in Helena as well as in other American cities to maintain law and order. This was mainly a ritualistic gesture of readiness.

A larger number of distinguished men have formed a Home Guard in Helena to protect the lives and property of the citizens. We welcome such a protecting force since it will guarantee just treatment for those Americans of Austrian or German origin calumniated by inferior elements as traitors, etc. [. . .] As soon as the Guard is activated, we recommend that the Germans offer their officers and troops due respect and allegiance.<sup>19</sup>

Native-born Americans sometimes expressed their trust in the foreign community:

Governor Whitman of the state of New York has invited well-known German-Americans of his

state to accept service in the Home Guard with the comment that, owing to their familiarity with the language and customs of those individuals under surveillance, they could be of special help to the authorities in the preservation of order and avoidance of unnecessary friction.<sup>20</sup>

Loyalty parades were held, such as the one in Helena in April, 1917. The German-Americans came out in great numbers and their motto was "America First". Over 3000 people marched in this parade. One Colonel Nolan present, stated that the German-Americans had done their part in building a great republic and were not to be identified with the injustices which Germany had inflicted upon the United States. A bishop who was also present, William Faber, added that the war was not against the German people per se, but rather directed against "Prussian ideas and the mad Kaiser."<sup>21</sup>

The Germans had clear-cut opinions about compulsory military service, the Wehrpflicht. As difficult a decision as it may have been, they were willing and ready to join the ranks, if America entered the war.

[. . .] The German-Americans will go to the front, as every other American, if compulsory military service is introduced. [. . .] The German-Americans will not act differently from millions of others who believe with them, that the honor of the country has not been attacked [. . .] furthermore, all will do this, who are against the subjugation of the country under British control. Only compulsory military service can and will forge the country into a real union, at least in deed.<sup>22</sup>

These people obviously felt strongly about defending America, but were equally intent on ridding her of British influence.

[. . .] If it comes to compulsory military ser-

vice which is probable, then the citizen must do his duty silently, even though reluctantly. There remains the hope that ultimately the German-American will have to fight only against a true enemy, not only of his new homeland but also an enemy of his people.

Nothing will change concerning our allegiance to German culture, if our new homeland fights with our old one. Germans have had to fight against Germans before. [. . .]

Therefore, our German associations will be able to continue their activities; as the government in Washington expressly declared in response to an inquiry, our German press will be able to continue its cultural work unhindered, subject to no restrictions, save those that also affect the English or any other press in regard to specific statements made during wartime. German gymnastics and singing are not actions against America, even if she wages war against Germany.<sup>23</sup>

William G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, wrote a statement praising the conduct of the foreigners, which was reprinted in the German newspaper:

The response to the first call for two billions of Liberty Loan Bonds has been an emphatic and convincing demonstration of the unity of purpose among all of the people of the United States, in this war for the defense of American rights and the establishment of a permanent peace.

Americans of foreign birth or extraction, individually as well as through their organizations, participated in a manner which was the source of much gratification to me.

The government will soon be called upon to seek additional credit. In this we must not fail. Like one gigantic unit with an enthusiasm, a willingness, a determination unprecedented, the American people must heed this call. They must do it regardless of creed, party, sex, age, birth or descent.<sup>24</sup>

Attorney General Gregory today praised the German-Americans in the United States for their respect for the laws of this country since the war with Germany began. Gregory made it known that since that time, only 125 arrests of enemy aliens have been made, since they failed to submit to the orders contained in President Wilson's

message. "The foreign-born citizens of America, taken as a class, deserve the highest recognition and praise for their manner of conduct since the declaration of war," remarked the Attorney General today in a public announcement. "Submitting to law and right, they have stood on the side of the government in almost all cases and they have justified the President's often repeated assertion that he entertains no doubts, as to how the foreign-born Americans would face their responsibility and duty, in the case of a national crisis."<sup>25</sup>

Finally the German-American community rejected any of its own people who proved themselves to be disloyal to America, and in so doing, soil the reputation of the entire community.

From Minneapolis comes the news that a soldier, Paul Schaffenberg, from the First Infantry Regiment of Minnesota, was court-martialed and sentenced to five years in prison. He was found guilty of supplying military information to Germany. Moreover, authorities had confiscated a letter in which he ensured relatives in Germany that probably ten million Germans in America were prepared at any given moment, to rebel against the government.

[. . .] These scoundrels hurt us German-Americans greatly. In such troubled times, such incidents are interpreted quite differently than would otherwise be the case, and one really cannot blame the Jingo Press if it profits by them. The more it is seen to that such bravado is rendered innocuous, the better for the 99 per cent respectable German-Americans.<sup>26</sup>

In Hoboken, a German named Fritz Kolb, was arrested after bombs and explosives had been found in his room. He was arrested because he was suspected of taking part in the bombing incidents of recent months; the Associated Press naturally made up their minds immediately that the man had intended to blow up Mr. Wilson, and the first news read to that effect; But such a crime could not help the German cause, but rather harm it, because it would only supply anti-German propaganda with many new backers. The German-Americans

have nothing in common with such assassins [Mordbuben].<sup>27</sup>

Even with the plethora of evidence in the German newspaper telling anyone who would read it that the majority of the German community was, in fact, loyal to the United States, the real test was yet to come. Would the native-born Americans believe these foreigners? It turned out that most of the native supporters were just mouthing platitudes, including the President. The problem was that the Germans comprised a minority group and they communicated among themselves in their own language, which excluded those by whom they would be judged--the native Americans who either could not read German, or did not care to try. Unfortunately the pleas for understanding by these immigrants came to naught.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, November 6, 1914, p.2. The Cheruscan blow refers to a battle won by the Teutonic tribe of Cherusicans who defeated three Roman legions in 9 A.D. (G)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.3. (G)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., November 6, 1914, p.6. (G)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., November 27, 1914, p.6. (G)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., February 13, 1915, p.6. (G)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., November 20, 1914, p.6. (G)

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., March 19, 1915, p.6. (E)

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., January 1, 1915, p.6. (E)

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., February 5, 1915, p.12. (G)

<sup>10</sup>Spezial Ausgabe, Montana Staats-Zeitung, April, 1917, p.17. (G)

<sup>11</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, July 23, 1915, p.6. (E)

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., December 3, 1915, p.1. (G)

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., February 15, 1917, p.1. (G)

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1917, p.1. (E)

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., September 20, 1917, p.1. (E)

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., November 19, 1915, p.5. (G)

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., July 16, 1915, p.2. (E)

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., March 5, 1915, p.7. (G)

<sup>19</sup>Spezial Ausgabe, Montana Staats-Zeitung, April, 1917, p.17. (G)

<sup>20</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, April 19, 1917, p.1. (G)

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. [Report of the parade is a paraphrase of an article]. (G)

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., February 22, 1917, p.6. (G)

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., March 29, 1917, p.6. (G)

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., September 27, 1917, p.1. (E)

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., May 17, 1917, p.7. (G)

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., March 8, 1917, p.6. (G)

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p.1. (G)



## CHAPTER V

### PERSECUTION

It might be assumed that up until World War I, the German-Americans were generally well treated, or at least tolerated by the native-born Americans. Afterall, they were upstanding, law-abiding people who worked hard and certainly contributed much to their communities. But in many instances they were not well treated and the proof of this is found, not in English newspapers, but in the German ones. The attitudes of Americans changed as early as 1914. Long before the United States entered the war, Germans and Austrians were often discriminated against, harassed and mistreated.

In this context, the situation in neighboring Canada warrants consideration. Americans might think that foreign-born citizens took refuge in Canada to avoid persecution or internment, and thus received better treatment there. This was so to some extent, for it is true that many fled north; but the articles in the Montana Staats-Zeitung indicated quite the contrary regarding their treatment. Here are the translations of some of them:

German persecution appears to have also reached its peak in Canada. Mr. Christ Vollquardt sends us the following request: "I would like to ask you on behalf of Mr. Nick Friedrich in Riga, Saskatchewan, to stop sending him the Staats-Zeitung temporarily,

because he is afraid that he will be imprisoned. He writes it is very bad there; the Germans must be on their guard constantly. He didn't write to me either, but to a friend in Chicago."<sup>1</sup>

The English appear to have a terrible fear of the Germans; anything that is tinged with [deutsch angehaucht] German makes them uneasy. A short time ago a typesetter arrived from Canada, who had been in jail there for fourteen days because he was thought to be a German spy; he bore the dangerous name of "Elliott". Later it turned out that his brother is now serving in the English army and all his relatives are residing in England. He looked a little too intelligent for an Englishman so he was thought to be a German.<sup>2</sup>

The next article described an incident in Calgary, Alberta, in 1916, apparently at the peak of transgressions against the Germans:

On Friday a group of soldiers stormed the Riverside Hotel, belonging to John Kaiser, a German, and a man was wounded in the ensuing scuffle. The two-story brick and framework hotel was demolished and the furniture was hurled into the snow and broken to pieces. The liquor from the bar was divided among the plunderers, of which about half were civilians. The police were powerless.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Wenderlin Schalz, a young Bavarian, called on our office and described to us how the Germans in Canada are being mistreated. He and three other Germans were arrested in Brandon, Manitoba, for no reason other than that they are German. All their money was taken and then they were thrown into prison where for three weeks they received nothing to eat but dark syrup and groats. The young people couldn't stand this treatment any longer and decided to flee. By means of a piece of iron they were able to make holes through the floor and the cellar wall, through which they crawled. Then they had about twenty feet of barbed wire to climb over, at the risk of being seen by the guard. But the young Germans succeeded in this hazardous undertaking and they escaped in the dark of the night. When their escape was discovered, the pursuit began which ended at the American border, where

they were overtaken by the Canadian Mounted Police. They were forced to surrender by the shooting. But one, the above-mentioned Bavarian, fled by jumping into the Milk River and he reached the other bank, but not without the danger of being shot, as the bullets of the pursuers splashed close to his head in the water. From the Canadian border, Mr. Schalz came in the best way possible to Helena and is now looking for work, while his comrades have been led back to prison where perhaps a bad fate awaits them.<sup>4</sup>

Articles such as this last one did not simply relate the facts in an objective manner. They read more like suspenseful short stories employing melodrama. Although the element of legend did pervade such articles, the events portrayed were real and must certainly have been frightening for those experiencing them.

The following notice was printed in the newspaper warning travellers:

Germans and Austrians travelling to Alaska, may find it interesting to know that the steamers of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company are docked in Prince Rupert, Canada. There exists, however, the danger that the authorities there may be taking German and Austrian passengers from on board and making war prisoners of them.<sup>5</sup>

The Montana Staats-Zeitung printed a number of comments relating the condition of those being held in concentration camps in Canada:

The many Germans in Canada who must wait for the end of the war in concentration camps in Vernon, British Columbia, have finally succeeded in obtaining permission to have and read German books--only those printed before the war, of course. [. . .] The Canadian military authority also permitted the sending of portraits of German military leaders and heroes, as well as the sending of German folksongs and sheet music [. . .] <sup>6</sup>

The next article must certainly have touched the hearts of

all who read it. It was reported by Mizzi Weiss, the daughter of Dr. Karl Weiss, the editor:

Twenty-five imprisoned children without Christmas presents: Mr. Walter Pleticha, a prisoner in the concentration camp in Vernon, British Columbia, informed the daughter of our publisher that among others, twenty-five children found themselves in the same camp, and were facing the third Christmas Eve in captivity. On the first two Christmases which they spent behind prison walls, the children lamented that the Christ child had forgotten them, Mr. Pleticha reports, and the scenes were so heart-rending that he could not listen to them one more time.<sup>7</sup>

The prison camp in Fort Henry, Kingston, Ontario, is missing two more Germans. W. Brubacher and E. John are the runaways. They were employed as gardeners and took the opportunity to dig out an underground hiding place under the flowerbed. They hid there until the night favored their escape to the St. Lawrence River. They also found a "neutral" Canuck, who transported them across for money.<sup>8</sup>

An interesting plan was conceived in 1915 for the homeless Germans who were either forced out of Canada or fled from there to escape internment. Many took refuge in Seattle, Bellingham and Tacoma, Washington, in preparation for a migration to New Mexico, to start a large farm with the name of "Hindenburg" after the commanding general, where hundreds would supposedly make a new home for themselves.

A final letter about events in Canada was written in English by a Helena man who returned from a visit in 1917. His letter expressed yet a different opinion about Canadian feelings during the war:

I have just returned from my visit across the line, visiting friends. Must say, that while the Canadians respect the Germans they are forbidden to admit it; they really have not much against

the Germans and are bitter toward England for their domineering ruling now in force in Canada. They have woken up and are sending very few men to the front. The sentiment is not very strong for England, and I have an idea against England at the close of the war. In fact there have already been uprisings in several Canadian towns, so each town of any size now has martial law. Hundreds of men are going to the United States to escape conscription, which will sure [sic] happen in Canada. The Canadian custom officers on the trains keep close watch and try and keep them back. Detroit being just across the river is literally thick with Canadians from Windsor. Canada is pretty sore at England and I prognosticate a rebellion not far off. [ . . . ] 9

Statements appeared in the newspaper which bore resemblance to announcements in their layout--short and to the point; only these were not typical announcements:

Dr. Fritz Bergmeier, the manager of the Volkszeitung Printing and Publishing Company in St. Paul, Minnesota, who upon President Wilson's request, on August ninth was arrested and held prisoner in the Ramsey County Jail, has been transported according to a regulation issued by the Justice Department in Washington, to Fort Snelling and from there immediately to Fort McPherson, Georgia, where he will probably remain interned until the end of the war. Mr. Bergmeier was given a few hours to get his business in order. 10

The sailors from the Kronprinz Wilhelm, Prinz Eitel Friedrich and the Appam, who were earlier interned in Philadelphia have been transferred to Georgia and quartered in a newly built camp. As the captains of the three ships left them they were given an ovation by the crew. 11

This last account on the interned Germans, written in English, was found in a 1918 issue of the pamphlet put out by the Order of the Sons of Hermann to explain the internment policy and the subsequent treatment of the Germans there:

Some purchasers of Liberty Loan bonds, who have read exaggerated reports of the treatment accorded

by the United States authorities to the German civilians interned in this country, have written to the Treasury Department protesting against the use of any of the money raised by the Liberty Loans in "pampering" these alien enemies. These interned German civilians are not prisoners of war and are not under the jurisdiction of the War Department or the Treasury Department, but by the provisions of our immigration laws are placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labor and comprise officers and crews of the German merchant vessels seized by the United States and other German civilians. Their deportation, which ordinarily would take place, is impracticable in view of the international situation.

These aliens receive no compensation from the Government except such as is allowed them for work actually performed, and the wages paid them are not exorbitant at all. In fact if from their labor and other sources they receive more than a moderate amount of money a month, all in excess of a reasonable amount for their care and comfort is withheld from them and placed to their credit in the postal savings banks or some other safe disposal [is] made of it.

The Department of Labor also officially states that these aliens are not allowed an excessive amount of food, but three meals a day of plain but thoroughly palatable, substantial food are given each. There is no waste in these detention camps and the same measures of economy and conservation are being practiced which are being urged upon every American household.<sup>12</sup>

Not only was German activity restricted in this country, but communication as well. Correspondence with relatives across the ocean was censored, and this action gradually moved down to the local level. The following excerpts from the Montana Staats-Zeitung mentioned some form of censorship involving letters from Germany: "Meanwhile the complaints pile up in Germany, that letters which were sent to the United States by way of Holland never reached their destination, but rather disappeared in inexplicable ways."<sup>13</sup>

How much Germany is cut off from telegraphic

communication with the overseas countries, is made evident by an article of the journal Electrical Engineering according to which, not fewer than eleven German telegraph cables have been cut through or broken.<sup>14</sup>

This of course, forced the Germans to send telegrams via England or France, where they were censored anyway.

One Fred Hensolt of Missoula sent an interesting letter to Dr. Weiss concerning censorship of local letters:

Many Germans are not yet aware of the measures the government is taking against us. [. . .] As secretary of the Hermanns-Söhne I send money orders, checks and promissory notes each month to the treasurer [Grossschatzmeister]. This also happened last month. A few days later I also got the checks from Lewistown. The next day the postmaster called and informed me that something wasn't right with my registered letters, and that I should make a list of their contents for him; [. . .] so I gave him a list of the enclosed checks as well as the vouchers. The next day I was again requested by the Post Office Inspector to fill out a form for a lost registered letter. Mr. Herweg of Missoula, received a registered letter on the same day from the national secretary, R. Schäfer, and it was requested of him to make known the contents of this letter to the postmaster. Naturally then it dawned on us.

One can hardly assume that this was merely an official measure of the local post office authority, but rather it is a case of organized espionage directed by the government. That our government can find nothing better to do is very regrettable, because the suspicion it shows against the citizens will only harvest distrust against the government and the leaders thereof. Personally, I even fear that the freedom of the press will be restricted and German newspapers will temporarily not be allowed to be published. I leave it to your discretion whether you print this matter in the Staats-Zeitung; at any rate, it would be good to warn the Germans also to be cautious in their correspondence. [. . .] <sup>15</sup>

Not only was personal correspondence censored, but the use of the German language as such was attacked, including the German newspapers as the main source of this,

which caused great consternation among the German-Americans.

The government bill relating to "Traffic with the Enemy" which recently was unanimously passed by the House and the Senate, has been written up in final form and will be voted on this week at the latest.

An important regulation gives the president the power arbitrarily to either "license" all foreign language newspapers or to demand from them, that they present to the Postmaster General for examination, a translation of their war commentaries in English, before they are granted postal dispatch.<sup>16</sup>

The American Newspaper Publishers Association in New York, whose members hail from daily newspapers in all parts of the country, has through its postal committee directed an energetic protest at the Senate in Washington in order to protest against the high taxes on newspapers, or against the attempt to use the postal service as a means for taxation.<sup>17</sup>

Naturally those Americans who could not read German felt threatened by the very existence of written matter which they could not digest at will, especially during wartime. Some thought of German writing, not merely as a foreign language, but more as a secret code by which the foreign-born citizens could communicate their traitorous thoughts and deeds openly among themselves. The Montana Staats-Zeitung did, in fact, voluntarily publish many of its more important articles in English for the very purpose of revealing German opinions to all Americans. Whether or not this action proved to be successful is quite another matter.

Here and there one now hears from the enemies of the German tongue in this country, the cry for government measures against papers appearing in German whose suppression is demanded. This demand is absurd and excessive. As long as the papers refrain from any provocation or similar actions, and the government can make sure of



this, there exists no reasonable or legal objection against the German language and its use in America. [. . .] If these diatribes [Auslassungen] are actually the result of a hint from the White House, we cannot lend expression emphatically enough to the joy and satisfaction over it. They are in exact accordance with the views adopted in this paper: First, that we are waging war against the German government over there, and not against the German language here. Second, that judgment should not always be passed on the German-American press as a whole, but rather on every American newspaper, regardless of what language it may be printed in.<sup>18</sup>

The possibility of censorship affecting the use of German in the schools became a real threat, as is verified by this article of 1917 concerning German instruction in St. Paul, Minnesota:

After a general movement was apparently in progress against German instruction in the city high schools [Hochschulen], and it had been reported that the children had already removed pictures of the emperor from the German textbooks and would be prepared at a moment's notice to make a bonfire of all German printed material, Superintendent Hartwell pours oil on troubled waters [gießt Öl auf die wogende See] by declaring himself absolutely against doing away with German instruction. Just like other pedagogues, he is of the opinion that the children could not be led astray by learning the German language.<sup>19</sup>

To show how far the native-born Americans could go in their persecution of these foreigners, here are excerpts from articles, printed in German, which border on the absurd:

It was left to Mr. Lynch, a Representative of the Legislature from Pennsylvania, to reveal to the astonished world, how far an American native can go in his xenophobia. The man introduced a bill which forbids any unnaturalized resident of the States to have dogs. Furthermore, he wants to prohibit every immigrant from hunting or trapping birds or other wild game. The Lynch bill says: "It shall be illegal for every unnatural-

ized inhabitant of the States, either to have a dog or to be found in the possession of one. The presence of a dog in a room, a house, a building, a tent or a camp which is occupied or supervised by a resident born abroad, should prima facia serve as proof that such a dog is possessed or controlled by the person who owns the land on which the dog is found." The punishment for unnaturalized dog lovers is fixed at \$25.00 for each offense, or confinement in the county jail, that is: one day for each dollar of the fine, plus the cost of the proceedings. Dogs found in the possession of a foreigner should be confiscated, sold publicly by auction, or if they are not valuable, killed.<sup>20</sup>

It appears presently that the poor dachshunds in England are faring very badly. There they are called "dachshunds" and this seems to be reason enough for the English, who normally are known to love animals, to treat them as hostile foreigners or worse. A woman in London began with a formal protest. "May I raise a protest against the cruel and senseless way in which some people treat the unfortunate turnspit dogs, simply because for several years these poor, dumb companions have been labelled with the German name 'Dachshund'." <sup>21</sup>

Many accounts supported the fact that in some incidents, individuals were harassed, solely based on their ethnic origin. Here are some examples:

The owner of the Rex Bar in Billings, well-known throughout Montana, Alfred M. Heimer, one of Buffalo Bill's most intimate former friends, had to put up with unscrupulous inciters in Billings, who insulted him and called him a spy. They went so far in their rudeness as to tell his wife, who was returning from a trip to Rochester to undergo an operation, that her husband had been arrested for espionage. This assertion which lacked any foundation, sent Mrs. Heimer back to her sick bed. [. . .] In the following we give an account of the matter as it appeared in the Billings Gazette:

"Asserting that current reports in the city stating that he was a German spy, while erroneous and foolish, were nevertheless injuring the health of his wife, Mr. Alfred Heimer yesterday

morning demonstrated his patriotism in a practical way by making out a check for \$25.00 as his initial donation to a Billings fund to be collected for the American Red Cross. He declared that he would contribute the sum of \$25.00 each month to such a fund. "I have been a resident of the United States for thirty-nine years," said Mr. Heimer, "and a citizen for twenty-five. It pains me to think that some people question my loyalty to the Stars and Stripes. In the past I have contributed \$25.00 per month to the German Red Cross. Now I agree to donate the sum to the American Red Cross and would suggest that some of these 'patriots' who have been questioning my loyalty do likewise."<sup>22</sup>

It is understandable that such events caused much bitterness in the foreign community, as is substantiated in the retorts which follow:

A great number are now being dismissed from the mines for unknown reasons, among them, respected German citizens like Mr. Hummel and Mr. Pfaff. Apparently, their patriotic viewpoints do not please the capitalists; as they are peaceful and good workers, there could be no other existing reason [for their dismissal]. In Russia there is no political freedom either, so why have freedom in this country? It is simply a burden for the capitalists who rule the country by the purse strings and are turning America into a second Russia.<sup>23</sup>

In Aberdeen, Scotland, Adolph Dietzel was sentenced to two months in prison, as he did not register with the police authorities. Dietzel is a resident of New York, says he was born in Chicago, and at the time of his arrest was in possession of an American passport, which was issued last August in Washington. American citizenship appears however, to have no worth in England.<sup>24</sup>

Since many of these incidents took place as early as 1915, one can imagine the pressure the foreign-born element must have felt by the time America entered the war.

The newspaper itself suffered because its funds from advertising diminished. Local groups either voluntarily or under pressure, withdrew their support of the German news-

paper, as though they no longer wanted to be thought of as accomplices in some wrongdoing.

The German newspapers were always the champions of the preservation of personal freedom; along that line, they opposed any prohibition law and therefore, indirectly stood up for the interests of the breweries. From that it must seem peculiar that a brewery at just this time withdraws its advertising patronage of the German newspaper--perhaps it thinks: oh, naturally the German newspaper supports us, but does not need any support itself.<sup>25</sup>

Dr. Alfred Blumberg has filed a charge in the Federal Court against the Public Health official from Silver Bow, Dr. P. H. McCarthey, in which he demands \$50,000 in damages for libel, as Dr. McCarthey called him a German spy in the presence of several doctors at the recent state convention of physicians.<sup>26</sup>

Even though some foreigners kept themselves quite well isolated from the rest of the population, such as the Hutterites, they were not immune from persecution:

With the coming of the First World War the Hutterian Brethren suffered because their neighbors were envious of their economic gains. Their firm maintenance of their four century old position on non-resistance subjected them to peculiarly vicious attacks by over-zealous local patriotic officials. In spite of the severity of the local treatment the only conscientious objectors to die as a result of persecution in the camps during World War I were two young men from a Hutterite colony--Joseph and Michael Hofer.<sup>27</sup>

However bitter their feelings about outright prejudice may have been, some Germans still managed to maintain a sense of humor, albeit sarcastic, during these trying times. This is shown by these articles, originally in German. The first was entitled "Philanthropy"--Menschenliebe:

A Mrs. Orr has died in Canada and has left her

will, in which it is stated that her fortune of some \$200,000 should be used for charitable purposes, but not a cent of this sum may go for the benefit of a German, Austrian, Hungarian, Bulgarian or Turk. It is truly remarkable nowadays what certain eccentric brains understand by charity and love of one's fellow-man!<sup>28</sup>

In the post office in Helena hangs a large poster distributed by the National Americanization Committee of New York City and the United States Bureau of Education in Washington D.C. In this poster, foreign-born people of all possible tongues are requested under the title printed in capital letters, "AMERICA FIRST", to learn the English language and to become citizens. The request is printed in all conceivable languages, but the German language is not included. Is this perhaps to be taken as a hint?<sup>29</sup>

These immigrants were therefore oppressed from all sides. They learned how to live with internment, harassment and censorship. Soon they would also be denied their newspaper.

This newspaper was attacked by other newspapers, foremost of which was the Helena Independent. The Montana Staats-Zeitung and the Helena Independent had a running feud and went at each other tooth and nail. For the one person, who embodied the characteristics of a stereotypic citizen spreading anti-German propaganda, who could be and was most influential in perpetrating this racism, was Will A. Campbell, the editor of the Helena Independent.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, December 18, 1914, p.6. (G)
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid. (G)
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., February 18, 1916, p.1. (G)
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., June 18, 1915, p.12. (G)
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., March 12, 1915, p.12. (G)
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., June 23, 1916, p.1. (G)
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., November 23, 1916, p.5. (G)
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., September 1, 1916, p.12. (G)
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., January 4, 1917, p.1. (E)
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., September 27, 1917, p.1. (G)
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., March 29, 1917, p.7. (G)
- <sup>12</sup>Hermanns-Söhne ("Sons of Hermann"), January 1918, p.2. Montana Historical Society Library, Archives, Montana Council of Defense papers, Box 4. (E)
- <sup>13</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, December 4, 1914, p.1. (G)
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p.6. (G)
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., March 15, 1917, p.2. (G)
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., September 27, 1917, p.8. (G)
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid. (G)
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., July 26, 1917, p.2. (G)
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., September 27, 1917, p.3. (G)
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., February 19, 1915, p.6. (G)
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., June 25, 1915, p.3. (G)
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1917, p.1. Text in Billings Gazette is in English. (G)

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., February 19, 1915, p.7. (G)

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., January 22, 1915, p.6. (G)

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., January 29, 1915, p.12. (G)

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., August 2, 1917, p.8. (G)

<sup>27</sup>Kenneth Charles Thomas, "A Survey of the Hutterite Groups in Montana and Canada" (Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1949), p.10. A microfilm of the thesis is at the Montana Historical Society Library. film #110.

<sup>28</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, December 28, 1916, p.2. (G)

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., April 21, 1916, p.5. (G)

## CHAPTER VI

### WAR WITH THE HELENA INDEPENDENT

While the war was raging in Europe, a battle was in progress on the home front between the Montana Staats-Zeitung and the Helena Independent. The editor of the latter was Will A. Campbell, a most zealous patriot, and a member of the Montana Council of Defense. Through Campbell, the Independent became the mouthpiece for the Council, which among other things, was "used to harass political opponents and attack individuals and organizations that opposed the war or did not back it as fervently as they did."<sup>1</sup> Campbell would attack some viewpoint expressed by the Staats-Zeitung or just the German press in general; then the Staats-Zeitung would make a counterattack and vice versa. The debates continued until the German paper's demise in 1917. The retorts became at times vicious. The Montana Staats-Zeitung first mentioned this riff between the newspapers in May, 1916:

After thirty years of untroubled, neighborly friendship, the Helena Independent has withdrawn its friendship with the Montana Staats-Zeitung. It [the Independent] is not exchanging information anymore, which is a common custom among newspapers. It left us the option of paying for continued delivery of the paper, but we declined with thanks. There really isn't enough in it to warrant paying for it and what is printed really does not interest us at all. Its vulgar abuse every morning of all that is



German already has spoiled our breakfast many a time.

As long as only German was printed in the Montana Staats-Zeitung, it was just Greek to [the Independent], but now that English is also used, which those of the Independent can read, they pay attention. All our articles written in English are strictly factual, containing no ugly outcries such as those found in the Independent; maybe that is why what they read hits home all the more [sitzen die Volltreffer um so gründlicher] [. . .] <sup>2</sup>

Sometimes the papers would resort to sarcasm in their comments to taunt each other, as in this English article in the Staats-Zeitung:

Today we can say a good word for the Helena Independent. In reporting about the Decoration Day parade it says: "In the first division were a squad of police, band, firing squad and a number of patriotic societies." The societies consisted mostly of German-Americans--hyphenates. Keep up the good work, brother.<sup>3</sup>

The Montana Staats-Zeitung accused the Independent of printing malicious and misleading statements to add fuel to its fire of hatred for the Germans. In one such article, the Germans of Helena were said to have collected over \$20,000 to send to the Kaiser to support his war effort. One German supposedly admitted this; however, "If the Helena Independent spoke the truth, it would not hold back this person's name; anyway, that would be the duty of a newspaper which stands for truth and justice."<sup>4</sup>

The Montana Staats-Zeitung criticized the Independent's use of the Associated Press as a source of information. The following article entitled, "Declaration of War. Don't Worry, as it's only by the Independent", was printed in English:

While all fair-minded citizens of the United States are doing their best to assist our government in overcoming the difficulties with Germany, the Helena Independent is doing its best to mislead its readers and lends its columns by conveying incorrect informations [sic] regarding the present deplorable controversy as between Germany and the United States.[. . .] On the editorial page we read under the caption "Shall we plant" this startling declaration: "Food is the chief requisite in war as in peace times; and we may need every ounce we can get, FOR OUR ALLIES [Emphasis in original] as well as for ourselves."

So far no publication in the United States dared to assert that America is one of the allies.[. . .] While our government is making every effort to avert entering the great conflict, the inkcoolies of the Associated Press-- which is owned and controlled by British capital-- is persistently misleading the public mind.[. . .] What better proof of this fact can we find, than such declarations as quoted above from [the] pen of the Helena Independent, which preaches neutrality and itself is the rankest violator of these principles.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, Mr. Campbell defended his position of so-called impartiality:

A foreign-born fellow appeared before Judge R. Lee Word the other day to secure his final citizenship papers. The papers were denied because the fellow damned the flag and witnesses testified that he had boasted, "if I had powder enough I would blow up the Helena Independent." The fellow claimed to be a German and his outcry was that the Independent printed too much against Germany.

Whether to take this fellow's mouthings and threats as a compliment or not, depends on how the matter is viewed. The Independent cannot be justly accused of being anti-German. The Independent gets its news from the Associated Press, the most impartial of news agencies. Editorially the Independent has only attempted to analyze this news.[. . .] But when it comes to a question of the kaiser-boosters who would attempt to defeat an American president because he would not take orders from Potsdam, the Independent is against every one of them and they have the most hearty and sincere condemnation of this newspaper regardless of the consequences.<sup>6</sup>

One of Campbell's strongest desires was for the German language to be banned, and this became a reality in April of 1918 through Order Number Three of the Council of Defense. The following article entitled, "Treason in the German Language", gives a good indication of how a patriot sounded in his fervor:

The federal government ought to take steps at once to put a stop to the treasonable utterances of newspapers and periodicals printed in the German language.

It is not a question of suppressing these publications but of denying them the right to spread their un-American, treasonable propaganda through the medium of the German language. We suggest that the mails of the United States be barred to any newspaper, magazine, book or pamphlet printed in the language of any country (other than in the English language) with which the United States has severed diplomatic relations.<sup>7</sup>

By this time, the statement "Be Fair, Read Our Articles in the American Language" appeared at the top of all the editions of the Montana Staats-Zeitung, this being in June of 1916. We entered the war less than a year later. The front page was now printed almost entirely in English, which turned out to be a bad omen for the German newspaper. An article from one of those first to appear with English on the front page, read as follows:

Says the Helena Independent: "The German newspapers of the country have notified the republican national committee [sic] that they will not stand for Hughes nor Roosevelt, but demand the nomination of Elihu Root of New York. Poor Root, he did not have much of a show anyway, now he has worse than none at all."

The Helena Independent is off its base again. The German-Americans have served notice to the political parties that Roosevelt, Root or Wilson will not do, but that Hughes is acceptable. Why

don't [sic] the editor of the Independent learn a little German, so he'd know what he is talking about. As far as shows and chances are concerned: The stand taken by the German-Americans has resulted in the elimination of Teddy Roosevelt.<sup>8</sup>

Campbell was very adamant on this subject of the presidency as is demonstrated by an article entitled, "Rally Round the Flag!":

To every American of German and Irish descent; certain fanatics are endeavoring to place an indelible stain upon your loyalty. If Woodrow Wilson is beaten for president of the United States, all real Americans will cherish forever the belief that disloyalty stood behind the verdict. We believe YOU [Emphasis in original], Mr. Average American of German or Irish descent, are loyal to the core, as true as any blue-blood. [. . .] Help us keep America for the Americans, clear your name of the least suspicion, by going to the polls on November 7 and casting your vote for Woodrow Wilson. It's the only way.<sup>9</sup>

This sounds somewhat hypocritical considering Campbell's previous editorials addressing the Germans.

A later editorial in the Independent comments on a large picture of Judge Hughes in the Montana Staats-Zeitung and the German-Americans' joy at his nomination:

If the German-Americans as represented by their presumed organ in Helena wait to be proud of their votes until Mr. Hughes is elected president, they will have a long wait. But the spirit shown by the Helena German-American paper is far from a praiseworthy one. [. . .] the election returns showed that there are thousands of men and women who trace their ancestry back to Germany who are not as is the editor of the Staats-Zeitung, German-American--but American-Germans.<sup>10</sup>

And here was the reply a week later from Dr. Karl Weiss, editor of the Montana Staats-Zeitung, which was printed in English:

Sir: During the last two weeks you have honored me twice by mentioning my paper in the editorials of your distinguished publication; amongst others [sic], you criticize my comment in the last week's issue of the Montana German Press upon Mr. Hughes' election. [. . .] If we erred in our judgement which was unintentional--this exception does not any more apply than in your own case, when you take me to be a Prussian. I never was one, nor were my ancestors and I never was a German subject. On the other hand I am proud of the German blood in my veins. But I must admit there is quite a difference between my Americanism and yours. You are an American by accident, as you were born here and you couldn't help it. I became an American by my own choice, because I admired and still admire my adopted country and its people. I was not forced to this conclusion, nor was I coerced to take this action. [. . .] This does not follow that we will accept your theory of what constitutes a hyphenate; [. . .] If those of German origin choose to register their protests against a president who permitted his British tendencies to rebound to the detriment of Germany in the present war, they were acting only within their rights--unless they have denounced their birth and mother's [sic] tongue. For time immemorial those of German ancestry have proven their loyalty and patriotism to the good old Star Spangled Banner.<sup>11</sup>

After the United States did enter the war, the conflict over whether or not German-Americans should enlist to fight, found expression in both newspapers. Here was the opinion in the Montana Staats-Zeitung:

No sensible man in this country however, expects the German-Americans to be very enthusiastic about it. While there is no doubt about their loyalty and that they will do their duty, leading American papers have expressed the opinion that as long as we maintain the voluntary military system the German-Americans are not expected to enlist and that if we are going to have compulsory service--the only just one--care should be taken not to use them against the countries from which they hail. [. . .]<sup>12</sup>

The statement went on to say that how this dilemma was solved

could set an example for the country in the future regarding the treatment of different nationalities during similar unavoidable conflicts.

Campbell found this idea preposterous and said so without hesitation:

Will Helena people continue to support a newspaper published in the German language which says: German-Americans are not expected to enlist in the United States Army! This is just what they are expected to do. The Staats-Zeitung forgets the solemn oath of an alien who becomes a citizen of the United States.

[. . .] Does the Staats-Zeitung mean to say there would be danger of the German-Americans failing to do their duty? [. . .] The Independent does not believe the Staats-Zeitung expresses the opinion nor the feeling of German-Americans generally. The trouble seems to be that the editor of the Helena German paper is a radical kaiser booster and expresses opinions which are those of the kaiser-boosting class in this country, not of the millions of German-Americans.<sup>13</sup>

No doubt Campbell felt frustrated at not being able to read more of what appeared in the Montana Staats-Zeitung due to the language barrier. But this did not keep him from speculating about what certainly must have been seditious writing in his mind. His editorials became increasingly inflammatory, certainly verging on libel.

The Independent has remained quiet about a dirty rag published by the Naegele Printing Company because this newspaper does not believe in personal persecution. The Montana Staats-Zeitung still appears with the name of Dr. Karl Weiss as editor and president.

This is a falsehood and a misrepresentation. Dr. Weiss left Helena for parts unknown some time ago. The paper is published by a miserable gutter-snipe and edited by a traitorous fool who dares not print his name at the editorial masthead.

Through respect for the family of Dr. Weiss for whom the Independent had the most profound sympathy,

this newspaper has refrained from telling the truth about the sudden exit of the learned German editor. The Montana Staats-Zeitung is not edited by Dr. Weiss. The paper prints a lie when it gives him credit for its treasonable and crazy editorials. [. . .] The paper is published by a miserable German who gets his support from the low saloons of Butte. He prints the name of Weiss at the head of the editorial column--God help Weiss--he was a man anyway, and did what the kaiser wanted him to do. Weiss is gone and no one has been secured to fill his shoes on the miserable foreign language sheet published by Naegele, and the hang-dog who solicits its advertising. Hates the Independent? We should say they do. Who supports the Staats-Zeitung: Get a copy of it and if you can read the most despised language of history, a tongue which will be damned as the world spins down the corridors of time, look at the merchants and businessmen in Helena who contribute to a paper whose editor is in Chicago--we guess.<sup>14</sup>

As if this were not enough, another editorial appeared the next day continuing this attack. Campbell stated that Weiss came to Helena originally because he was forced to leave Canada.

[. . .] The Staats-Zeitung was an instrument of the German ambassador and German spy system in the United States and it raved against President Wilson because of his Americanism. [. . .] The wrath of Helena came down good [sic] and Dr. Karl Weiss left--some say east, some say west, and some say over the cuckoo's nest.<sup>15</sup>

Campbell stated that the foreign language press was a menace to the country and he did not understand how any "100 per cent American business" could support it.

Naturally, this put a good deal of pressure on anyone associated with the Montana Staats-Zeitung who wanted to remain an accepted member of the community. Fred Naegele, who printed the newspaper felt compelled to defend his posi-

tion in the eyes of the populace. In a letter to the editor of the Independent he wrote:

I desire to make oath [sic] that neither myself nor the Naegele Printing Company have any interest whatever in the Montana Staats-Zeitung. We have nothing to do with the ownership nor publication of the paper except as printers. Our firm sold whatever interest we had in the publication approximately ten years ago.

Our firm merely does the printing of the paper for the publishing company, and its publisher is Dr. Karl Weiss who now resides in Chicago and sends weekly contributions toward [sic] the paper and controls its editorial policy from there. We are "publishers" merely as printers, not as owners, nor editors.

We have nothing in common with the kaiser or the German government. The attached affidavit I have made and hope you will publish the same.<sup>16</sup>

Naegele simply tried to clear his good name and Campbell's reply to this was downright cruel--written as a parody:

For an answer to vaporings on der Independent, Herr von Naegele for a reply pauses. Before this great piece of defensive literature on behalf of der kaiser to the common American swine is to the public given, Herr von Naegele with many dear friends of der kaiser und crown prince with much consult. By wireless spy system used by unscrupulous Helena newspaper that Herr von Naegele charges editors mush head sheet foreign flags on their unpaid-for automobiles fly. This to Herr von Naegele serious offense because these colored rags other kings than God and kaiser do represent. So big reply in kultured language past over due much and American swine for big surprise and exposure do wait.<sup>17</sup>

This was the last time the Independent made mention of the Montana Staats-Zeitung before the German paper closed down in September, 1917. So the Staats-Zeitung became part of history, but the people whom it represented, lived on. Their ethnic complexion was soon to fade into that great



mass of American society--uniform, but colorless--just as did all the other nationalities.

The German people, as well as other ethnic groups, were hunted down by the Montana Council of Defense, a sort of self-appointed, vigilante group. It did not help that Will A. Campbell was a member.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Charles S. Johnson, "An Editor and a War: Will A. Campbell and the Helena Independent, 1914-1921" (Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1977), p.64.

<sup>2</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, May 26, 1916, p.8. (G)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., June 2, 1916, p.4. (E)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., March 3, 1916, p.8. (G)

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., February 22, 1917, p.1. (E)

<sup>6</sup>Helena Independent, October 8, 1916, p.4.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., April 8, 1917, p.4.

<sup>8</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, June 9, 1916, p.4. (E)

<sup>9</sup>Helena Independent, October 8, 1916, p.4.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., November 16, 1916, p.4.

<sup>11</sup>Montana Staats-Zeitung, November 23, 1916, p.1. (E)

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., April 5, 1917, p.1. (E)

<sup>13</sup>Helena Independent, April 9, 1917, p.4.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., August 31, 1917, p.4.

<sup>15</sup>Helena Independent, September 1, 1917, p.4.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., September 3, 1917, p.4.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., September 6, 1917, p.4.

## CHAPTER VII

### A LOSING BATTLE

The Montana Council of Defense was formed in 1917. Governor Sam Stewart was the chairman and Charles D. Greenfield was the secretary. Will A. Campbell was appointed as one of the members by the governor. The Council organized to promote patriotism and maintain law and order during the war. The Council enacted orders dealing with particular problems, such as preventing violence and vagrancy, and the serving of liquor to men in the military, promoting increased agricultural and timber output, as well as protection of the forests from fires. The Council gave itself blanket power to conduct hearings and issue subpoenas to witnesses. And it was Order Number Three, enacted on April 22, 1918, which had the most profound effect upon the Germans throughout Montana. Through this order, the use of the German language was forbidden in public and private schools, as well as in churches. Specifically named books, such as Ancient World by West, Writing and Speaking German by Professor Paul Pope, and William the Victorious by Karl Zastro, were ordered removed from libraries and schools were given the authority to remove any books thought to contain German propaganda.

After this order was issued, letters began coming in

to the Council, either supporting the measure or disapproving of it. A high school principal in Melstone, Montana, sent this note:

"Melstone, Montana

"May 2, 1918

"Dear Mr. Greenfield:

"We have discontinued the teaching of German and all German texts and library books were burned on Liberty Loan Day.

"Very truly,

"Harriet Taft"<sup>1</sup>

Other examples written to show compliance with the order were:

"Geraldine Public Schools

"May 4, 1918

"Dear Sir:

"[. . .] At the present writing I can say that there is not a German book in our school library, and we have so many valuable texts and references in our own language, that I cannot say that we are in any[way] handicapped by the absence of the Hun's propaganda in our school library.

"H.Sauer

"Principal"<sup>2</sup>

"Billings, Montana

"November 26, 1918

"Gentlemen:

"Permit me to express my appreciation of your refusal to permit the German language to be used in church services and in the schools of Montana.

I am only one but I am one and an American citizen and I sincerely hope the order forbidding the use of the language in such work will be positive and lasting. The use of the German language in schools and church services has been one of the most prolific causes of the keeping alive of the German spirit in America.

I believe that I am voicing the sentiment of the great mass of American citizens in the attitude assumed.

It is my opinion that the high standards we have established during this reign of murder, started, carried on and gloried in by the German people as well as the Kaiser Bund, must be maintained for the future. The sooner we begin to teach the children of foreigners who are coming to this country to better their conditions, the

American language, the ideals of America, the biography of Americans who have helped to make the country, the better.

"Respectfully,  
"Edgar Gifford  
"Lawyer"<sup>3</sup>

Here was a letter showing the paranoia present, and the sentiment of some in support of the Council in general:

"Polson, Montana  
"March 17, 1918

"Dear Attorney General:

"I respectfully beg you will be so good to consider this matter confidential as the writer is a farmer, living in a district tickly infested by germans [sic] and they might hurt his stock or crop if they would find out. When I see these men they always wish to "clean up" the Huns, but so far the Polson Homeguards have been able to avoid such acts [. . .] I have been able to find out that these german meetings are held for the same purpose as we white people hold patriotic meetings, to keep up the right spirit for "the kaiser and the fatherland". The only way to get some of them and have them punished, would be to get in a stranger who could be relied on and he would work on a german's farm[. . .] I have been told that the Huns and their sympathizers in this country are planning to see as little crop as possible put in, by means of destroying the seed, if possible. The talk is that elevators in different parts of the country "might catch fire pretty soon". Understand that some of the horses also "might take sick" so as to delay the seeding for the white men[. . .] The germans round [sic] here are too smooth to give themselves away, are doing their dirty work in a very cunning way and we do not know how to get evidence. Perhaps you could give us some advice? It is very trying, indeed, to have to witness these ungrateful Huns do their seditious work and not be able to secure proof and prosecute them.

"Karl Knudsen"<sup>4</sup>

Some self-appointed spies reported to the Council if they heard any German spoken in church:

"Park City, Montana  
"June 6, 1919

"Dear Mr. Campbell:

"Mrs. Nathan McCrary, wife of a prominent citizen of this community and a very heavy Liberty Bond buyer, reports that she went to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, so-called German church, yesterday morning, and the minister, G. Elbert, preached in the German language, continuing in that language until she left, and possibly so after she left.

This is the first time that I have ever heard any such complaint. Mrs. McCrary is reliable and would not say so unless it was so.

I do not believe that the law forbidding the preaching in the German language has ever been repealed.

"Yours very truly,  
"F. T. Ellis"<sup>5</sup>

The Council also received letters from all over Montana, mainly from people affiliated with German churches, pleading for permission to retain the use of German during church services. The older German and Russian immigrants in particular did not understand English, and being intensely religious, they were in this way essentially denied the right to worship. Their spiritual welfare was at stake, which was reason enough for many families to leave Montana. Some German preachers and their families were even harassed and mistreated.

W. L. Lawson of Billings, E. T. Eaton, B. G. Brockway and F. B. Conley presented case for the petitioners agreeing to the statement that unless the order was modified so as to allow one service a week in the German language, the German-Russian laborers in the beet fields in Montana were going to leave and go to Nebraska where the order against the use of the German language in church services was less stringent. It was set forth by the gentlemen named that if these people left Montana, it would be impossible to secure other labor to take their place as it had been the experience that the only people who could be depended upon to do it were the German-Russians.<sup>6</sup>

The following statement first appeared as an editorial in the

Midland Empire Farmer in Billings, and it summarized the German dilemma:

How far can we intelligently go with forced measures to Americanize as quickly as possible our immigrant population?

The matter is of immediate and important interest to Montana right at this time because of an order of the State Council of Defense made last spring forbidding the use of German in any religious services in Montana. It seems that there are large numbers of families in Montana who come from the Germanic provinces of Russia and consider themselves Russians, but still speak the Teutonic tongue. These people are mostly of middle or old age. They are declared by all who know them to be intensely patriotic, to have subscribed to the various war activities and to be appreciative of the duties as well as the privileges of their adopted land. Their children are all learning English--in fact will talk nothing else--but they as a rule have not acquired the new tongue.

These are intensely religious [people] and this order strikes deeply into their lives. They cannot worship in any tongue but their own and they might almost as well be denied the right to live as denied the right to worship. According to reliable information large numbers are planning to leave the state on account of this order, and at Laurel a few nights ago, it is said that the heads of fifty families met to make arrangements to migrate, probably to Nebraska.

The fact that the state may be losing some settlers is not the point. Better lose all its settlers than be less than 100 per cent American. But the question is this? Are we not going a little farther than is necessary or sensible to effect the ends desired when we raise this prohibition as to religious services? [ . . . ] ?

To this, and all similar requests, the Council always replied with the following form letter:

"Dear Sir:

"Your communication to the Montana Council of Defense in relation to removing the restriction on the use of German in church services was laid before the council at its meeting                     . After mature consideration and deliberation the

council decided that the order forbidding the holding of church services in the German language be not amended, modified or rescinded.

"Yours very truly,  
"C.D. Greenfield"8

County branches of the Council held hearings at which immigrants were interrogated to determine their degree of patriotism. Sometimes the line of questioning pointed to badgering the witness, as in this typical excerpt from a hearing held by the Council in Ravalli County. The man being questioned was a small farmer with few assets:

Question: Have you bought any Liberty Bonds?

Answer: No, sir.

Question: Any war savings stamps?

Answer: No.

Question: Contributed anything toward the War Service League or Red Cross?

Answer: Nothing to speak of; my wife and I are members, we contributed our membership.

Question: Any reason why you refused to do so?

Answer: I have considerable debts to meet. While we are in entire sympathy with all the work in that organization, we have felt we should meet our obligations.

Question: Don't you think the country would be in a pretty bad way if only those who did not owe anything contributed towards the War Service League or bought bonds? Have you any personal property?

Answer: I have a few horses and cows that I have recently purchased.

Question: Is it your intention to buy any war savings stamps or contribute anything towards the War Service League?

Answer: We are very glad to when we see ourselves



clear.

Question: In other words you don't feel you are able to do it until you pay all of your debts?

Answer: Not all of our debts; we deny ourselves a great many things we would like to have; we are living in a wreck of a three-roomed [sic] house; the improvements on that place are in bad condition and we don't feel able to pay \$6.00 or \$7.00 a day to a carpenter to repair those buildings and I am trying to repair the house [. . .]

Question: In other words you are looking forward to your own comfort all the time?

Answer: Not altogether; I am getting to the age when I think we should.

Question: Don't you think, Mr. Brown, you could contribute some small amount towards the War Service League, without in any way causing you to stint yourself at home?

Answer: [. . .] I am trying to make hay now; I have a short crew all the time; you men that have been farmers know the profit in farming and you men that have not been don't know; we pay \$3.00 or \$4.00 for hay men a day and they watch the clock awful [sic] close; I work from daylight to dark, my wife and I.

Question: So you have no disposition at this time to say that you will not do any better in the future with reference to contributions than you have done in the past?

Answer: Is there a law to compel me to do that?

Question: No sir, except public opinion, and if that is not sufficient law, I don't know what is.<sup>9</sup>

In another example of such cross-examination, a Mr. G. W. Grunau was questioned by a Mr. Mitchell, first about whether or not he felt the German language should be used in the United States. The prosecuting attorney stated he thought its use just perpetuated the "clannish notions" of the Germans. Then the questioning took a different turn

and the grilling continued:

Mitchell: Which do you think is the superior civilization, that of Germany or that of the United States?

Grunau: That is a question I couldn't answer, it takes a professor to answer that question.

Mitchell: What is your personal opinion on it now?

Grunau: I think we have a better system of government but government does not mean civilization.

Mitchell: Which do you think is the superior civilization regardless of government?

Grunau: As far as that is concerned, we have just as many rascals in this country as they have in Germany.

Mitchell: Is the percentage of rascals in this country greater than in Germany?

Grunau: There is a percentage of rascals in every country.

Mitchell: Do you think that Germany has a superior civilization?

Grunau: Well, no, I don't think it, I think we are equal to the German people every bit.

Mitchell: Do you think we are equal to the German people? Do you think the scales are evenly balanced?

Grunau: We might have, well, I don't think, I don't know, it is hard to say about this. We might have qualities and merits that are superior to the qualities and merits that the German people have, and vice versa.

Mitchell: Alright, name them.

Grunau: Beg your pardon?

Mitchell: Name some of those superior qualities of the Germans.

Grunau: The German people are a thrifty and industrious class of people; they are favored and honored.

Mitchell: They are what?

Grunau: They are honored.

Mitchell: Coming back to that question, there seems to be some question in your mind as to which nation has the superior civilization.

Grunau: The people of the United States have got good qualities and so have the Germans, and whether one people is superior to the other, I don't know, you have got to ask the college professor to answer that.

Mitchell: What is your opinion?

Grunau: We are undoubtedly equal to the German people.

Mitchell: But not superior?

Grunau: Well, I don't know whether, we might be as far as I know.

Mitchell: What is your opinion?

Grunau: I tell you, you know, it is a bad quality to look down on another people and I didn't look down on any nation. I think that each nation has got good qualities [. . .] 10

The sudden exit of Dr. Karl Weiss from Montana was a mystery, as there was no material to substantiate his reasons for leaving or whether or not he ever returned. The last mention of him, albeit brief, was made at a hearing conducted in Helena in June of 1918 by the Council of Defense, in connection with an investigation of charges against one Oscar Rohn. Rohn was a Butte mine operator who had been accused of disloyalty and conspiring with a man convicted of spying, Carl von Pohl. Rohn stated during his interrogation that he had travelled to Chicago on the same train with Dr. Weiss in May, 1917. They apparently corresponded by letter, and Weiss had asked for Rohn's financial assistance with a

newspaper in Chicago. Weiss had also been associated with Carl von Pohl because the latter had at one time solicited subscriptions for the German newspaper in Montana, long before he came under suspicion. Weiss was made to look guilty by association.

Apparently Weiss had a scheme in mind, at one time to colonize foreign farmers in eastern Montana to attract new settlers and buy land. This never came to pass. Rohn stated that prior to the United States' entrance into the war, he felt Weiss would have been a good person to go among the foreigners to impress upon them the need for allegiance and loyalty to this country. Weiss was well-educated and understood the difficult position the foreigners were in. But this plan also never came to fruition since Dr. Weiss left the state.

After the war ended, and peace terms were established between Germany and the United States in August of 1921, the Montana Council of Defense was dissolved. It had served its purpose, but it left scars with the foreign-born community. The German-Americans would again lead normal lives in a country no longer propelled by wartime activities and maleficent hysteria. But a chapter in their lives was closed, and with it, a certain spirit faded into obscurity. Foreigners would continue to come to this country, but not with the same unity of purpose and national expression.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Letter, Harriet Taft to C.D. Greenfield, May 2, 1918, Montana Historical Society Library, Archives, Montana Council of Defense papers, Box 3. These letters with the Council of Defense papers, kept in the Montana Historical Society Library in Helena, will hereafter be cited as COD papers.

<sup>2</sup>Letter, H. Sauer to C.D. Greenfield, May 4, 1918, COD papers, Box 3.

<sup>3</sup>Letter, Edgar Gifford to the Council of Defense, November 26, 1918, COD papers, Box 3.

<sup>4</sup>Letter, Karl Knudsen to the Attorney General, March 17, 1918, COD papers, Box 3.

<sup>5</sup>Letter, F.T. Ellis to Will A. Campbell, June 6, 1919, COD papers, Box 3. Campbell was also a member of the Montana Loyalty League.

<sup>6</sup>Montana, Minutes of the Council of Defense Meetings, March 1918 to 1921, Box 1, p.103.

<sup>7</sup>W.W. Gail, "Are We Going Too Far?", Midland Empire Farmer, February 4, 1919, quoting COD papers, Box 3.

<sup>8</sup>Letter, November, 1918, COD papers, Box 3.

<sup>9</sup>Testimony at hearing held in Stevensville by the Ravalli County Council of Defense, October 7, 1918, pp.2-3. Interrogation of Victor E. Brown of Wolfe Pine, Fort Peck Reservation.

<sup>10</sup>Montana, Minutes of the Council of Defense Meetings, June 4 and 5, 1918, Box 1, Vol. II, pp. 1067-1069.

## CONCLUSION

In 1918 there were 94,713 immigrants in Montana,<sup>1</sup> many of whom spoke German. Before the World War a person could probably have walked down a street in Helena, Montana, and stepped into a German bakery or butcher shop, or into a church where hymns were being sung in German.

After World War I started, national consciousness began to change, including the overall attitude toward immigrants. The Germans were no longer thought of as merely part of the melting pot, but rather as foreigners posing a threat to the "native Americans". They became "hyphenates".

After the United States entered the war, the great majority of the German-Americans chose to support this country in any way possible, but they also had to convince the native-born Americans of their intentions, which proved to be a hard and persistent battle.

Prejudice ran rampant. A man might be harassed or mistreated if he had a foreign accent or a name that sounded German. In large cities "there were continual spy scares, witch hunts, even kangaroo courts that imposed harsh sentences of tar and feathers. The innocent victims were usually German-Americans or antiwar radicals."<sup>2</sup>

German-Americans, if they had not already done so, were pressured into contributing to patriotic organizations. Censorship became widespread. German letters, books and

newspapers were affected. "No state in the union engaged in quite the same orgy of book burning, inquisitions of suspected traitors, and general hysteria [as Montana]." <sup>3</sup> The language itself was also in jeopardy.

In April, 1918, the Montana Council of Defense succeeded in banning the use of the German language in Montana. Letters of protest poured in, especially from pastors of German churches, but to no avail. This order was strictly adhered to. The older immigrants who did not understand English felt this as a form of religious persecution. This was reason enough for some to leave the state. They very probably went to Nebraska, Kansas or the Dakotas, neighboring states which also had a high percentage of immigrants.

The Council conducted hearings at which many innocent German-Americans were interrogated about their loyalties. "Hundreds of suspects were hauled before Montana's Council of Defense to answer charges based on the rankest kind of rumor." <sup>4</sup> Often the line of questioning had little to do with the original reason for holding the hearing. "The voluminous records which the County Councils sent to the State Council are appalling evidence of the grossest invasions of privacy on a massive and statewide scale." <sup>5</sup>

Maintaining the German press was an up-hill battle for many reasons, not the least of which was anti-German sentiment. The price of materials rose during the war, at the same time the number of subscribers began to dwindle. Dr. Karl Weiss, the editor of the Montana Staats-Zeitung,

had to defend his paper against the constant attacks of the Helena Independent and its editor, Will A. Campbell. Campbell, a controversial figure and a staunch patriot referred to Dr. Weiss as a kaiser booster. He did his best to besmirch whatever good reputation the German-Americans may have established for themselves as good citizens of the state. In the face of so many adversities the Montana Staats-Zeitung was finally forced to close down in September of 1917. Its existence, although spanning only thirty short years, had been a unique and enlightening contribution to the annals of Montana history.



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction, 15th Biennial Report (Helena, Mt.: Independent Publishing Co., 1918), p.126. Archives, University of Montana.

<sup>2</sup>John M. Blum, et al., The National Experience, A History of the United States since 1865, Part II (4th ed., New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), p.567.

<sup>3</sup>K. Ross Toole, Twentieth-Century Montana: A State of Extremes (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), p. 139.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.190.

## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX

Following is a translation of the poem on page 15:

The German press, it struggles and fights  
For our noble teaching.  
It carries the light of truth into homes  
And gathers hosts of thinkers.  
It fights and persuades unceasingly,  
And assuages the opponent's fanatical hate.  
Therefore you fight too, my German people,  
For your press, the free press,  
Who always for you and your sacred right  
Strived in the foremost rank.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

- Arndt, Karl J. R., and Olson, May E. German-American Newspapers and Periodicals 1732-1955. Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer Publishers, 1961.
- Blum, John M.; Morgan, Edmund, S.; Rose, Willie Lee; Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr.; Stamp, Kenneth M.; and Woodward, C. Vann. "War and Its Sequel." A History of the United States since 1865. Part II of The National Experience. 4th ed. New York: Harcourt Jovanovich, Inc., 1977.
- Child, Clifton James. The German-Americans in Politics 1914-1917. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1939.
- Jensen, Vernon. Heritage of Conflict: Labor Relations in the Nonferrous Metals Industry Up to 1930. Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1950.
- Toole, K. Ross. Twentieth-Century Montana: A State of Extremes. Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972.
- Wheeler, Burton K. (with Healy, Paul). Yankee from the West: The Candid Turbulent Life Story of the Yankee-Born U.S. Senator from Montana. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1962.
- Wittke, Carl. German-Americans and the World War. Ohio Historical Collections, Vol. V. Columbus: F. J. Heer Printing Co., 1936.

### Journals

- Gutfeld, Arnon. "The Ves Hall Case, Judge Bourquin, and the Sedition Act of 1918." Pacific Historical Review, 37, May 1968.
- Rader, Benjamin. "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917." Pacific Historical Review, 36, May 1967.

Manuscript Collections

Montana Historical Society Library. Archives. Montana Council of Defense papers.

\_\_\_\_\_. Archives. Hermanns-Söhne. Case 2, Drawer 10. January, 1917, p.3.; January, 1918, p.2.

\_\_\_\_\_. Archives. Letters to the Council of Defense. Box 3 and 4.

Montana State Documents

Minutes of the Montana Council of Defense Meetings. March, 1918, to 1921.

Testimony at hearing held in Stevensville by the Ravalli County Council of Defense, October 7, 1918.

Newspapers

Helena Independent. 1916-1917.

Montana Staats-Zeitung. 1886-1917.

Published Reports

Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction. Fifteenth Biennial Report. Helena, Mt.: Independent Publishing Co., 1918.

Unpublished Manuscripts

Evans, Robert Emylyn. "Montana's Role in the Enactment of Legislation Designed to Suppress the Industrial Workers of the World." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1964.

Fritz, Nancy. "The Montana Council of Defense." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1966.

Johnson, Charles S. "An Editor and a War: Will A. Campbell and the Helena Independent 1914-1921." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1977.

Ruethen, Richard T. "Burton K. Wheeler, 1905-1925: An Independent Liberal Under Fire." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1957.

Thomas, Kenneth Charles. "A Survey of the Hutterite Groups in Montana and Canada." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1949.

Wetzel, Kurt. "The Making of An American Radical: Bill Dunne in Butte." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1970.

Grimsby, O. M. "The Contribution of the Scandinavian and Germanic People to the Development of Montana." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1926.